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[FAIR AND SCORNFUL.]

A BURIED SIN;

OR,

HAUNTED LIVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Kate Branksome's Foe," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

MAKING A FOE—GAINING A FRIEND.

He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
Exceeding wise, fair spoken and persuading;
Fiery and sour to those that lov'd him not;
But to those that sought him sweet as summer.

LUNCHEON progresses somewhat stiffly. Lord Ferrars preserves a sullen silence, answering only in monosyllables when addressed. Lady Clare maintains a haughty reserve. Blanche, Mrs. Carew, and Mostyn Howard toss the ball of conversation to each other, but the silence of the others is an awkward incubus, and the game flags.

"Lord Malbreckthane went to town yesterday," remarks Mrs. Carew. "He was summoned rather suddenly to advise the wife of his old friend, Sir Miles Dunraven, upon a matter of business."

"Sir Miles is a great traveller—a wanderer upon the face of the earth," explains Blanche. "It is a great pity, for he has a fine estate which requires looking after, and Lady Dunraven is a very beautiful woman."

She speaks the last words with an almost imperceptible sigh. Mostyn wonders idly whether this girl with the fair, serene face can be jealous of other women's attractions.

"It is more than a great pity. It is a monstrous injustice," says Mrs. Carew, in that frigidly monotonous voice of hers. "Continuous absence places his wife in an equivocal position, and she is not overburdened with discretion, I fear."

Another unconscious sigh from Blanche. Mostyn changes the subject.

"When will the earl return?"

"To-morrow, probably. He will be vexed when he learns that you had to walk from the station in his absence."

"It was a very pleasant walk." Mostyn's eye meets Lady Clare's for an instant, but it expresses haughty indifference. There can hardly be a stranger contrast than that between the prattling wood-nymph of an hour ago and this silent patrician beauty.

Mostyn has changed also. His delicately-chiselled features wear once more the look of mingled gravity and sweetness, and of strength beyond his years, which has become habitual, a look which passed from them for a time when he reclined on a grassy bank with wild flowers flying about his ears and the piece of sweet-brier clinging to his hair.

"Did you come by the road, or the fields, or the wood?" asks Mrs. Carew.

"By the wood."

"Did you not lose yourself?" inquires Blanche. "The wood is very intricate."

"Fortunately I found a guide, who conducted me hither for a very trifling consideration."

Not a muscle of his face relaxes as he makes the allusion. He looks calmly across the table,

and Lady Clare returns the glance with one as unmoved, save that it seems to convey the slightest suspicion of disdainful, warning defiance.

For some reason she wishes to ignore the previous rencontre.

"What are you going to do after luncheon, Ferrars?" asks Mrs. Carew.

"Knock over a few young rabbits. I want to try my new breech-loader."

"Are you fond of shooting, Mr. Howard?" continues the lady.

"Very. At least, I used to be, when more opportunity fell in my way. Of late I have had no practice."

There is a little significant silence. Mrs. Carew is imagining Lord Ferrars may have the grace to offer his tutor some sport, but nothing is further from that young nobleman's intention.

"I daresay Ferrars has a gun at your service," she suggests.

"No, madame, I have not. My old gun is being cleaned. If it were not, I should be loth to trust myself within fifty yards of any learned ignoramus who might mistake me for a coney."

"For a what?"

"For a coney. Theological studies, Mrs. Carew, might have taught you that the 'coney' and the rabbit are identical."

"Do not be profane. Can you lend Mr. Howard a gun?"

"If Lord Ferrars will permit me to see him shoot I shall be equally well pleased," says Mostyn, smiling.

"I cannot prevent you from coming, of course," is the rude and unwilling rejoinder.

The shooting party consists of Lord Ferrars,

armed with a double-barrel, Mostyn Howard, a gamekeeper, and a boy with a bag to carry the slaughtered rabbits.

Deliberately, for the sun is warm, they wend their way to a slope covered with prickly furze bushes, and put in the dogs. Soon there is a chase, and a series of squeals quickly silenced. One of the dogs has caught and slain a baby rabbit about the size of a man's fist.

"The summer is too young for this kind of sport," says Mostyn.

Lord Ferrars bestows on him a supercilious glance, which seems to say—"Little enough you know about it."

"Yes, sir, it is," responds the keeper.

"Dykes, you are a thundering fool," comments his master.

"Maybe, my lord," says the man, pleasantly, "but I know my business."

The nose of one dog is insinuated into a furze-bush. His body is stiffened, and quivers with excitement.

"Look out, my lord!"

Bang! The rabbit bolts, and Lord Ferrars's shot rings out almost simultaneously.

With a suppressed grin on his weather-beaten face, the keeper picks up the animal, a young one, not a quarter grown, and mangled almost to pieces by the shot.

"It'll do for a ferret to make one meal off if he ain't werry hungry," he says, with grim irony.

The next shot is more successful; it brings down a plump buck, three parts grown. The three following are misses, to Lord Ferrars's exceeding chagrin. They are in a place where the path is little more than a yard wide.

"You fire too slowly," suggests Mostyn; "this is not a place for taking aim. The gun must be discharged on its way to the shoulder almost."

Lord Ferrars receives the criticism in high dudgeon, and thrusts the gun into his companion's hand.

"Perhaps you think you can do better yourself," he sneers. "A guinea you miss three out of the first four shots."

"I take you," says Mostyn, quietly.

There is another squeal, a rustle among the bushes, a glimpse of a swift, emerging body, and a report. A heap of brown fur lies motionless. As they advance to pick it up, a startled rabbit breaks cover and scuds down the path, a tolerably straight one, for twenty yards or so. He receives the remaining barrel, and rolls over, the hind legs broken. The dogs end his sufferings. Mostyn offers to return the gun.

"No," says Lord Ferrars, rather more amiably. "You have fairly won, but keep on for awhile."

It is a warm, sunny spot, this bank of gorse, such as rabbits love, and here they swarm by thousands, even thus early. In five minutes Mostyn has done to death as many of the innocent brown things, only missing once.

Lord Ferrars begins to conceive a slight admiration for his dexterity.

"Are you a good flying shot?" he asks.

"Tolerably."

"I will bet you a guinea you do not bring down that wood-pigeon."

The bird in question is coming straight towards them, but at a considerable height, with great velocity. The wind has risen, it blows full in their teeth, and accelerates the natural speed at which she is flying.

"Done!"

Mostyn waits until the pigeon is immediately above them, and selects the instant that a slight divergence from her course presents part of her side. He fires, and the wounded bird comes fluttering down, her wing broken.

"A fine shot, sir," says the keeper. "There isn't many as could have done it."

"It is not everyone who shoots with so magnificent a gun," rejoins Mostyn.

"My father gave it me," says Lord Ferrars, with the first approach to graciousness he has yet shown. "Do you really admire it, Mr. Howard?"

"It is the finest I ever handled."

Making a slight detour, they work back towards the starting point, and Lord Ferrars, who

is really an excellent shot, bags several more rabbits, with very few misses. At each success his good humour increases, and by the time they reach the castle his manner is almost cordial.

Congratulating himself on this first step to a better understanding, Mostyn superintends the unpacking of his luggage, which has arrived. This task ended, he settles himself in his private sitting-room, and opens his beloved manuscript. Long habit of concentration enables him to dismiss all everyday thoughts and cares, all haunting ghosts and shadows of the past, all hopes or fears for the future that might distract his mind.

He is lost in the age of Catherine de Medici, deep in the intrigues of her time, when a deluge of water descends upon the back of his head, flooding his hair, trickling into his neck, making collar and shirt-front limp as tissue paper, and plentifully besprinkling books and papers before him.

He springs from his seat, with flashing eyes, and looks round the room. Not a soul is visible. The ceiling is perfectly whole. Both doors of the apartment were within view as he sat—no one could have entered by them.

He follows the course of the little stream upon the carpet, and looks again towards the ceiling. Within three inches of it there is a curiously carved scroll, which, on closer inspection, appears to be a ventilator. He jumps at once to the correct conclusion, that Lord Ferrars must have provided himself with a garden syringe, have mounted a short ladder in the corridor outside, and have thus succeeded in throwing cold water on his literary efforts. Opening the door softly, he hears the young nobleman sneezing to himself in the hall below.

An oval looking-glass is sunk in the wall of his room between the two windows. Mostyn catches sight of his face in it as he returns from making the discovery, and stops, in shame and contrition.

He knows, with the knowledge born of unavailing repentance and sorrowful remorse, the one fatal defect in his character, proneness to a fierce gust of passion, swift and scathing as a tropical tornado. But he has never before seen the storm sweep over his own face, blurring all the sweetness, the strength, the grave, earnest repose of it, and leaving instead the distorted lineaments of reckless rage.

He stands solemnly contemplating his own reflection, until the lines of passion are lost in those of penitent, mournful gravity.

"Eighteen hundred years ago," he muses, "when men were stricken thus, an evil spirit was said to enter and rend them. I must exorcise the demon by watching and prayer. Or," he continues, bitterly, "the latter end of this man may be 'worse than the first.' Great Heaven! worse than the first!"

A spasm of mental agony contracts the smooth, white forehead, and blanches the handsome, oval face until it looks like a marble god in pain, from the chisel of a Greek sculptor.

Then the strong will prevails. The haunting memories are thrust back within the cavern of memory. Mostyn Howard is himself again.

"What a curious play is life," he muses. "A tragedy and a comedy in one. The funeral meats coldly furnish forth the marriage feast. We sit on the edges of our graves and revel till we drop into them. In action or in thought it is the same. We shrink appalled from the remembrance of our sins and of our sorrows, and a gong reminds us it is time to dress for dinner."

It is the sound of the first bell that brings his moralising to this climax. Mrs. Carew is alone in the drawing-room when he enters. She unbends a little, noting the careful accuracy of his costume.

"I am old enough to tell you without impertinence, Mr. Howard, that I am rejoiced you do not deem it labour lost to dress for dinner. Young men of the present day are apt to be extremely lax in their ideas on the subject. They think any costume will pass en famille. You will see Ferrars lounge in presently in his shooting-coat and perhaps with boots smelling of the stable."

"Talk of an angel and you see his wings,"

shouts Lord Ferrars, from the doorway. "You are a true prophet, Mrs. Carew, albeit of evil. Here is the coat you admire, and here are the boots, with soles an inch or so thick, adapted for waiting. Let us have a jig to beguile the tedium of waiting," and he makes a feint of encircling her stately frame with his right arm.

"Ferrars, you are incorrigible," says the lady, rapping his knuckles sharply with her fan. "Here are Blanche and your sister, they shall have an arm each to keep you in order. I place myself under Mr. Howard's protection."

Dinner proves a far greater success than luncheon. The stiffness of a first introduction has worn off. The ladies are in most becoming semi-toilettes, and the consciousness of looking their best is an agreeable one even to such acknowledged beauties as Blanche Carew and Lady Clare. To crown all, Lord Ferrars is so inspired by the success of his first practical joke he is disposed to temporary cessation of hostilities, and some racy college anecdotes Mostyn Howard relates arrest and rivet his attention, treating as they do of a life upon which he confesses to his secret soul he would gladly enter, although he declines preliminary drudgery.

Mostyn contrives to enjoy the meal. He begins to hope the wild young lord may be won in time, and meanwhile he is thrown into more congenial society than he had anticipated. The only drawback to his happiness is Lady Clare.

In vain he racks memory to recall a chance word by which he may have offended her. Up to the moment of their parting, when he transferred the wild flower to her hat, she was a gay, untidy, impulsive child, treating him with unconventional and almost brotherly familiarity, presumably in gratitude for the risk at which he saved her from danger, perhaps from death.

But from the moment of their formal meeting—all within the hour—she has ignored the service and tacitly disclaimed the original acquaintance. Her mien has been that of a young empress to a presuming courtier. She talks freely enough as the meal progresses in an original, impulsive way of her own; but never by any chance does she address him, and if he speaks to her she answers with freezing coldness. How has he offended?

He goes over every incident of that interview in the green fields, of that ramble through the cool, shady woods. True, in conjecturing her station it had never occurred to him she might be an earl's daughter, and he ended by imagining her a connection of the housekeeper's. But if she had been a princess he could not have shown her more respect and courtesy. He had fettered and carried, had obeyed her lightest whim, had indulged in pleasant, familiar banter, only in response to her own manner.

When she tendered the little brown palm at parting he certainly held it a second longer than courtesy demanded, he reflects guiltily, and no great wonder, seeing that for all he knew at the time they might be taking their separate ways, never to meet again.

Then, like inspiration, there flashes upon him the remembrance of that odd change in her face when he told his name and estate.

Mostyn's lip curls haughtily. He is no contemner of rank and wealth, or the advantages of good blood. But in his pride of intellect he holds himself any man's equal, and in his pride of taste and refinement he rates himself "gentleman," believing in his heart that the man who could pass the tests by which he tries himself might stand before kings.

Her face changed when he stood confessed as Lord Ferrars's tutor.

Perhaps she had allotted to him higher rank and so permitted him to fall into easy, friendly converse. Perhaps the earl has spoken of him as a man of low origin, and the earl's daughter, in her provincial exclusiveness and pride of birth, despises him for the accident which placed him originally low in social status; in her artless waywardness showing the scorn she feels more plainly than is quite in good taste.

Be it so. From his own high position in the aristocracy of talent, from the eminence to which he knows himself entitled, and to which the world shall soon admit his claim, he can look un-

moved upon country girls she may be—

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moved upon the prejudices of an ignorant little country girl—wealthy, titled, beautiful though she may be.

He rouses himself from the reverie into which he has fallen during Ferrars's description of a dispute and temporary strike in the middle of haymaking amongst the labourers of a neighbouring farmer. He looks across the table to find Lady Clare's eyes bent searchingly upon him, as though she were trying to read his thoughts.

She blushes painfully at being detected; the scornfulness comes back to her face, doubled, intensified, but it is that of a petulant, wayward child.

A half-smile plays about his lips, he returns the gaze until her own drops before the calm, cold, superior majesty of intellectual strength.

"I have made an enemy," he thinks. "As a set-off I must try to gain one friend if not two."

He turns to Mrs. Carew and her daughter and does his best to amuse them. Possibly some slight exultation at Lady Clare's recent discomfiture piques him to appear at his gayest and best.

Mrs. Carew has the nice conversational tact of an experienced woman of the world. Blanche brings a girl's flights of fancy, and the charm which culture and refinement lend to feminine utterances. Mostyn himself is inspired to something like genius.

Even Ferrars grows interested and excited by the brilliant talk and lively repartee. Only Lady Clare sits silently and proudly aloof.

The ladies have withdrawn. Mostyn and Lord Ferrars sit at their wine, and the latter has drunk several glasses in rapid succession, quite as much as is good for him.

"I say," remarks the young nobleman, filling his glass again and passing the decanter. "You are a queer fish, you know."

"I think I may venture to return the compliment," rejoins Mostyn, smiling.

"It is an awful pity you are a tutor. Take friendly advice and go away quietly to-morrow."

"A very inhospitable speech. Why?"

"Because I have bet Clare ten to one I drive you away in a month, and that means mischief."

"Suppose I decline to be driven away?"

"You must take the consequences," says Lord Ferrars, sullenly. "Remember, I have warned you because you cut up well about the shooting. Go you must and shall. A thousand donkeys are not more obstinate than my mind when it is made up."

"And a thousand donkeys," retorts Mostyn, sternly, "could not kick me out of any path in which I choose to walk. I shall join the ladies."

The sound of a magnificent piano guides him to the drawing-room, but the music ceases as he enters. Miss Carew is playing a prelude, her mother sits in the corner of a sofa in a suspiciously drowsy attitude. Lady Clare is on a low ottoman in a corner, caressing a tiny Maltese terrier.

"Were you about to sing? I am fortunate in the moment of arrival."

"Are you fond of music?"

"So fond that it becomes one of my minor trials, and I sometimes wish there were none in creation, save indeed the 'music of the spheres.'"

"How so?"

"To begin with, I hate to hear a thing I love tortured and maltreated, as music certainly is by ninety-nine performers out of a hundred."

"How shall I dare to play before so severe a critic?"

"Had you been one of the ninety-nine I should not have ventured the remark. Remember, I heard the prelude to your song on my way to the drawing-room. The door was open."

Without further parley she begins to sing. Lights have not been rung for the room is in the semi-darkness of a summer gloaming. Mostyn sinks into a low chair and listens.

"Tho' poor be the chamber, come here, and adore;
Lo! the Lord of Heaven
Hath to mortals given
Life for evermore—life for evermore."

He sits spell-bound by the beauty of that rich contralto voice, swelling clear and effortless as the notes of a bird. The tears come into his eyes. He is thrilled—fascinated.

It is not Blanche Carew who sings, it is a sweet, grand spirit voice warbling the invitation—"Come here and adore."

"Wind, to the cedars proclaim the joyful story,
Wave of the sea, the tidings bear afar.
The night is gone! Behold, in all its glory,
All-broad and bright rises the Eternal Morning Star!"

They forget each other's personal existence, these two true lovers of music, she who sings and he who listens, until with a few great throbbing chords the song ends.

Blanche Carew's white fingers still rest caressingly upon the ivory keys as though she loved them. Seen from Mostyn's position her head is clearly outlined against a window. The eyes look thoughtfully into vacancy, he fancies there must be a smile upon her lips called up by the last words which passed them—"Life for evermore."

"I should not dare to listen for long to your voice," he murmurs.

"Why not? Does it torture and maltreat a thing you love?" she asks, lightly.

"It is music itself. It seems to wander through locked chambers of memory, compelling me to follow. At all other times my Will is master of Thought, but with me music paralyzes Will."

"Is there so much pain in your life?" she asks, sympathetically.

"Do not let us speak of it," he answers. "How does music move you?"

"It lifts me to Heaven," she says, earnestly. "Mr. Howard, might it not lead you thither if you follow in the spirit of my song—'Come near and adore'?"

They talk on, these two whom the music has moved to sympathy. Lord Ferrars is in Lady Clare's corner beyond ear-shot. He entered just as the last notes died away.

"What do you think of the bear-leader, Clare?"

"I hate him," is the pettish reply. "But I fear I shall win your chocolate creams."

"Not a bit of it," says Lord Ferrars, confidently. "I shall drive him away. It seems a pity too, for I am inclined not to dislike him."

"Baby!" says Lady Clare, with a low, irritating laugh. "Because he was artful enough to praise the child's new toy after beating him hollow at shooting with it."

Lord Ferrars grinds his teeth savagely.

"Do you think that was it? Then I will be even with him before—"

Mrs. Carew awakes from her doze with a snort.

"We must have lights," she exclaims. "Will somebody ring?"

In a few seconds the room is in a soft blaze of light.

Mostyn Howard approaches the corner where brother and sister are conversing.

"Lady Clare," he says, "will you play or sing? May I venture a petition?"

"No, sir," is the curt response. "I can do nothing—nothing."

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHARGE OF MURDER.

Dead! Is he dead?

Then Heaven have mercy on his soul—and mine.

It is the first week in July. The earl has returned from town, bringing a piece of information which fills Mrs. Carew with dismay. He has invited Lady Dunraven to accept the hospitality of Freston Castle for a few weeks, and she has not declined the invitation.

"How did it come about?" asks Mrs. Carew.

The earl does not know. Something was said about the heat and dustiness of London streets, in contrast with the coolness and verdure of the country. Lady Dunraven deplored the loneliness of her own country seat, and felicitated Lord Malbreckthane upon the possession of two such charming companions as Mrs. Carew and

her daughter. Here the earl's recollections become more vivid, and his communicativeness less candid.

He remembers almost word for word the gallant speech in which he prayed his friend's wife to grace his home with her presence for awhile.

He flatters himself after the fashion of mankind that his assurance its attractions would then be indeed unrivalled, an assurance given in his best manner and with his courtliest bow, had something to do with the lady's ready acquiescence.

But he is conscious that in Mrs. Carew he has a disapproving and unsympathetic listener. He blunders and stammers over his tale, and is strongly tempted to cut it short by walking out of the room.

So that the one appalling fact she deduces from chaos is that Lady Dunraven will assuredly come, so soon as she can free herself from existing London engagements.

"Which will doubtless be the exact date of St. John Darrell's arrival," says Mrs. Carew, with icy sarcasm.

"What of that? Darrell will not eat her, I suppose," snaps the earl, who is rapidly losing his temper.

"Is it possible, Lord Malbreckthane," she inquires, "you do not know that Lady Dunraven's platonic friendship with Mr. Darrell is the talk of their set?"

"St. John Darrell is a much vilified man in my opinion. Whilst they stick to platonic there can be no great harm in the intimacy."

Mrs. Carew answers by an expressive movement of the eyebrows. The much vilified man is her *bête noire*. He shocks all her prejudices, outrages her most cherished ideas. She would not allow Blanche to meet him in any other country house, and now she will have to mount guard over both her own daughter and the lady visitor.

It is not a pleasant prospect, but there is only one course, submission. She cannot afford to quarrel with a luxurious establishment and eight hundred a year; so she submits in silent disgust.

The earl is surprised and delighted to find Mostyn Howard has already arrived. He has taken a great liking to the young man, and for a few days shows so strong and flattering a desire for his company that tutor and pupil scarcely meet.

Once Mostyn remonstrates. In his keen conscientiousness, to allow himself to be treated entirely as a guest seems taking an unfair advantage.

But the earl has an answer ready, so sensible a one he can but yield.

"The very fact of your installation," says Lord Malbreckthane, "is a point gained. I want Ferrars to grow gradually accustomed to your presence and content with it. In time he may begin to seek your society, a result infinitely more likely than if it were at first forced upon him. Companionship may ripen into confidence, and then you will begin to influence his opinions and actions, but undue precipitation would spoil all."

Mostyn sighs. A shrewd judge of character, he sees much to admire in the reckless youth. But he is somewhat sceptical as to the possibility of getting at the good in him. The slight advantage gained in the rabbit-shooting expedition is already lost. There is a strong adverse influence at work, that of Lady Clare.

Daily she taunts her brother with the probability of losing his foolish wager. Daily some disagreeable trick is concocted and executed. Occasionally it is foiled by incessant vigilance, more generally it is successful.

But the victim has not once lost temper since the syringing episode. A calm smile, perhaps a slight scornful curl of lip, are his tormentor's rewards. And yet there is something in Mostyn's eye which forbids the imputation of cowardice. In his secret heart Lord Ferrars is compelled to wondering admiration, a sentiment that might beget respect and friendship under happier auspices, but that engenders only dislike beneath Lady Clare's ceaseless gibes.

It is the first week in July, but the weather instead of becoming more sultry has made a step in the reverse direction. Summer heat has changed to the cold winds and frequent showers of early April.

This day in particular the thermometer is so low fires have been lighted in several rooms, and since daybreak it has poured incessantly with rain.

The earl, unable to enjoy his customary ride or drive, devotes himself to his bankers' pass-book and his steward's accounts.

And Lord Ferrars in an exceedingly bad humour at being confined to the house, and totally without the continuous resource books afford, applies himself with far greater assiduity to the congenial occupation of tormenting his tutor.

First by words, in which he is signally worsted. Mostyn's superb coolness and stinging sarcasm are doubly a match for him. Next by actions, in which he so far succeeds that a weary look comes into the grave face, and the lines about the mouth, usually of infinite patience and sweetness, become set and hard. The young tutor begins to think it time to take resolute action, and retreats to his own rooms to think out the problem. Here with locked doors he is safe from intrusion, and also, thanks to necessary precautions, from an untimely deluge of water.

Presently a knocking announces the advent of a visitor.

"Who is there?"

"It is I," replies Lord Ferrars's voice. "Let me in, please."

Mostyn, somewhat dubious as to immediate results, throws open the door.

"Mr. Howard," says the young nobleman, politely, "I am frightfully hard up for amusement. Will you have a round with the gloves?"

The unwonted urbanity, and a certain lurking malice in the speaker's eyes put Mostyn on his guard.

"There are grooms enough in the stables if you want to box," he replies, coldly.

"I am tired of the company of cads."

"I rejoice to hear such an admission," says Mostyn, with sarcastic emphasis.

"Besides," continues Lord Ferrars, with a sneer, "I should like to see what stuff you are made of."

The young tutor reflects a moment.

Should he refuse it will be to the certain loss of any slight prestige he may have already gained. Should he accept, a severe trial of strength and temper must ensue, the exact result of which it is impossible to foresee.

"Very well," he assents, slowly. "But I warn you it is possible you may be disappointed."

With an exclamation of triumphant and malicious joy his companion leads the way to some outbuildings, instructing one footman en route to bring instantly a goodly supply of claret and lemonade, and another to summon the stable-helper of whom mention has before been made as a frequent associate in the favourite pastime.

"Jim," he says, "I am going to box with this gentleman. Bring two pairs of gloves" (in a lower tone, but not so indistinctly as to escape Mostyn's quick ears), "red strings and blue—a pair of each."

"But, my lord," remonstrates that worthy.

"Do as I tell you, sir!" is the fierce response, and Jim flees in terror.

The gloves and the beverages arrive simultaneously, and whilst the viscount devotes his attention to a satisfactory mixture of the latter in a huge silver tankard Mostyn warily takes advantage of his preoccupation to examine the gloves which, selected from two different sets, had been particularised by the colour of their strings.

The circumstance arouses his suspicion. He is aware that there are hard gloves manufactured, which have much the appearance of ordinary ones, to evade the law against prize-fights, but with which combats open to bets are decided almost as conclusively as with the naked fists.

And to his indignation he discovers that the

gloves tied with dingy blue strings are made almost in the same manner—that they are certainly as hard again as the others.

His eyes flash at the discovery. He turns sharply round to administer the stinging reproof which rises to his lips. Then he pauses, a curious smile upon his lips, as he divests himself quietly of unnecessary clothing.

He has decided to repay unmanly treachery by a severe punishment. For good or for ill it is time the relations between himself and his pupil should undergo modification.

Before Lord Ferrars has finished tasting and compounding the liquors the other dons the hard gloves, and Jim the helper, with an appreciative grin on his face, tightly fastens the blue strings.

Jim retains so vivid a recollection of his own inferiority in the "noble art," and the many severe drubbings that inferiority has cost him, he is disposed to see the tables turned with great complacency.

The young nobleman's countenance falls when he at length remarks his opponent's equipment for the contest.

"Jim, you accursed fool," he cries, angrily, "you have handed Mr. Howard my gloves. I intended that pair for my own use."

"I thought so," rejoins Mostyn, quietly. "That is why I put them on. I should like to see what stuff you are made of, Lord Ferrars."

At that apropos quotation the viscount's cheeks flush crimson. For a moment he seems about to lose his self command; the next shame bristles his tongue.

With a dangerous glitter in his eye he throws off coat and vest.

Mostyn looks on coolly with a quiet smile.

It is not the first time he has marked similar signs in an antagonist and hailed them as omens of victory.

Perfect command of temper is almost the first desideratum in a boxer. And yet he sees he has work before him, despite the advantage given by choice of gloves.

Lord Ferrars's manner implies perfect confidence in his own skill.

In height and reach of arm the lad has the advantage of an inch or two—a great point.

Also he is in perfect training, whereas Mostyn has not handled the gloves since the old college days, and has not even taken part of late in active sports of any kind.

To sum up, the younger man—for man he is in bulk and strength, though not in years—is altogether larger in bone and muscle.

But Mostyn Howard's slight, graceful limbs are the perfection of manly symmetry; he has not an ounce of superfluous flesh about him. His muscle, though not unduly developed, is hard as iron, and in the arm especially, he has marvellous strength. More than one burly bargeman, in old town-and-gown riots, came to rue the day he singled out the slight, almost consumptive-looking individual whose blows fell afterwards like the kicks of a horse.

"Are you ready?" asks Lord Ferrars, impatiently.

"Yes. Is it to be gentle play or hard hitting?"

"Hard hitting."

And with the words the viscount strikes a blow, swift and savage, in the hope it may take his antagonist by surprise.

It is parried.

Parried, and returned with such lightning speed that Lord Ferrars, caught quite unawares, fails to intercept it. It takes him full on the forehead and sends him to the ground at full length backwards.

Exulting, Jim gives one irrepressible, ecstatic chuckle.

Neither the blow nor the fall hurts the young nobleman. They shake him a little, that is all, but at the low laugh of the stable helper all the Viking in him wakes. With a bound, he springs to his feet, and rushes furiously upon his assailant. A few swift blows, in which neither has the advantage, and he is down again, a small stream of blood trickling from his nose.

"Your nose is bleeding," says Mostyn, when

he rises. "Had you not better leave off for to-day?"

Lord Ferrars's reply is a shower of blows, which the tutor wards as best he may. Two or three break through his guard, but they fall harmless. He knows that presently his turn will come with the striker's exhaustion.

As indeed it does. Panting and breathless, the lad desists. Mostyn drops his guard.

"I will give you breathing time," he says. "Your play is very bad. You would be quite at my mercy now if I chose to take advantage."

The opportunity is too tempting for Lord Ferrars, in his bitter passion, to resist.

With a quick bound, he fells Mostyn to the ground, before the latter, all unprepared, has time to resume the defensive. Twice the feat is repeated before the tutor, astonished at such want of manliness, can fully regain his footing.

When he does so there is a change in his face. It is that of an avenger. It expresses stern justice and pitiless contempt.

Lord Ferrars reads it aright, and becomes more wary. The contest will be no child's play now, he knows.

"Stop," cries Mostyn. "Jim, untie these strings."

"Have you had enough? Are you afraid?" sneers the viscount.

"Take off Lord Ferrars's gloves. I shall exchange with him."

"What are you going to do?" asks that young gentleman, greatly perplexed.

"Administer the soundest thrashing you ever received," is the stern reply. "Guard yourself."

There is no unnecessary conversation now, no sound save the tramp of the combatants and their laboured breathing.

A delusive rap or two, a feint, and a blow, thrown in with crushing force. It takes Lord Ferrars under the chin, and he flies half a dozen yards, in that description of fall which is commonly known as "head over heels."

Jim picks him up. Jim's face is a picture of the liveliest distress; but no sooner is his master again upon his legs than the helper's expression of sympathetic concern changes, in the background, to one of intense delight.

"Hain't he got his match now?" he is whispering to himself. "Lord! I do 'ope Mr. 'Howard 'all give it 'im 'ot."

And Mr. Howard's will is quite good to "give it 'im 'ot." He is determined to teach his unruly pupil a severe lesson.

Equipped with the soft gloves, pitted against strength and endurance that should be fully equal to his own, opposed to one who is really a very pretty boxer, reckless enough to take advantage of every opportunity, whether fair or otherwise, and armed with the formidable hard gloves, the issue would be doubtful to an onlooker.

Not so to Mostyn Howard. He has discovered that his antagonist is deficient in science.

Infinitely superior as the viscount has proved to the rustic opponents with whom he has hitherto coped, he finds his master in a man accustomed to box with the finest athletes in the university, a man who took lessons from the best pugilists of the day, who learned their artifices, and who emulates their skill.

The friendly sport has changed to a proceeding exceedingly like an unfriendly fight.

Lord Ferrars's strokes fall with the swinging force of a revolving mill-sail. Miscalculating the enemy's strength, secure in the certainty that a blow from his own glove must be a severe one, he trusts mainly to brute force and extremely hard hitting, whereas Mostyn, cool and wary, acts principally on the defensive. He bides his time. Mentally cool that is, for both combatants are pouring with perspiration. Even in a cold July boxing is hardly a seasonable amusement.

There is no great advantage at first, apparently. Once Mostyn falls; his foot slips, and a shower of blows, although parried, bears him to the ground. And several times he has been struck, generally upon the forehead. About the same number of strokes have told on either side.

But there is this important difference:

Ferrars by reason arm. The part of it was almost Where sledge-h They are the face, "clean of The ar used as floor of his very different soft green Lord I confused freely. There is bones. And ne fast and he takes draws th and look There boxers th tortured w may lend surely I other is But no in Mostyn offers, w slight lo ness in effectual, strength, measures The la A driv unskilful of his kn The ey It will



[A JOYFUL REUNION.]

Ferrars's blows have been planted successfully by reason of his superior height and length of arm. They have descended upon the upper part of the head, often when their strength was almost spent.

Whereas Mostyn's strokes are delivered with sledge-hammer force, straight from the shoulder. They are often planted fairly in the centre of the face, and several times they cut the viscount "clean off his legs," as Jim would put it.

The arena is the interior of an outbuilding used as an occasional coach-house. It has a floor of hardened earth, and to fall upon it is a very different thing to being stretched upon the soft green turf.

Lord Ferrars rises each time considerably confused and shaken, his nose is bleeding freely. His eyes feel somewhat inflamed, and there is an unpleasant soreness about the cheek bones.

And now, to Jim the helper, the fun becomes fast and furious. Unobserved in the excitement he takes a long pull at the forgotten tankard, draws the sleeve of his coat across his mouth, and looks on excitedly.

There is this marked contrast between the boxers that the face of one is flushed and distorted with impotent rage, which, although it may lend momentarily increased strength, assuredly lessens precision; whilst that of the other is pale and calm.

But not the less is there determined purpose in Mostyn's watchful eye. So surely as opportunity offers, whether through a misleading feint or a slight loss of balance, or an instant's carelessness in the delivery of a blow meant to be effectual, the soft glove, driven with Herculean strength, does its work, and Lord Ferrars measures his length on the floor.

The latter has a slight advantage.

A driving blow is slightly turned aside by an unskilful parry, and Mostyn's thumb instead of his knuckles meets the viscount's eye.

The eye is half closed by the shock.

It will be black to-morrow, but meanwhile the

striker's thumb is temporarily sprained and disabled; his right hand is almost powerless.

For a minute or two he must act solely on the defensive. Lord Ferrars perceives it, and does his utmost to break the one-handed guard.

And now the previous husbanding of Mostyn's strength stands him in good stead. He circles rapidly round and round his blown and breathless pursuer with an agility which prevents the latter from coming to close quarters.

If he can only gain a little time, the acute pain the thumb causes will cease.

The ruse is successful. The instant Lord Ferrars pauses, from sheer inability to maintain such violent exertion, is the very one in which Mostyn feels, with a glow of anticipatory triumph, he may resume hostilities.

It is the crisis of the contest.

His blows fall like hail, and now the defence is feeble. They beat down the guard—they half blind the young nobleman. With cruel precision they pour in upon nose, eyes, and forehead. In vain the victim retreats step by step. The full strength of that powerful right arm, which just now was almost useless, seems to lift him quite off his feet with one final drive full on the chin, and in falling his head comes with a dull thud against the wall.

One groan, and he lies motionless.

A terrible fear seizes the victor.

"Jim," he says, and his voice sounds hoarse and altered, "take your master's feet. Let us carry him to the threshold. The fresh air will revive him."

Oh, that it may—that this fearful stillness may have no fatal meaning.

The helper throws back the wide doors. The summer rain still falls steadily. A brief sentence from an old book he was reading only yesterday flashes into his mind. "Happy the dead that the rain raineth on."

"My God!" he prays in silent agony. "Not that—not that."

A slim figure in a waterproof is passing; a young girl whose reckless movements are not to be controlled by weather, when the whim seizes

her to wander out of doors. A girl whose fair cheeks blanch with white fear at sight of the two men bearing that unconscious burden, who sinks on the wet threshold, and takes the livid head all smeared with blood in her lap. It is Lady Clare.

"Is this your vengeance?" she hisses. "Is it for this you bore his insults so patiently for a time? Is it for this you have smiled so scornfully and curbed your fierce temper day by day because the hour of dastardly retribution had not yet come? Mostyn Howard, you are my brother's murderer!"

(To be Continued.)

A SPRIG OF MISTLETOE: A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Pretty Angler," "A Mysterious Husband,"
"A Little Love Chat," "Won Without
Wooing," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

RUN TO EARTH.

Hour of evening—holy hour.
Where is thy gentle, soothing power
That sheds o'er other hearts a calm
And pours on other breasts a balm?

THE cries of Lois roused the house and brought a little host of servants to the hall to see her with fear-stricken face, and all her accustomed composure and stately grace cast aside, come flying down the broad oak staircase. Behind them, in the doorway of the breakfast-room, stood Lady Lawstocke shaking her head with an inane look upon her face and mumbling to herself:

"So she has found him—found him as I saw him last night. At last, at last, the harvest of a wicked life is gathered in."

"Haste, you men," cried Lois, addressing the startled servants. "Go to your master—help him. Oh! my God, how horrible, how unbearable it is!"

She paused half way down the stairs and veiled her eyes with her hands, while the men stared at each other, all with the dread truth dimly before them.

"Why do you stand there?" asked Lois, looking up. "Go to him, I say. In the wardrobe in the picture gallery. He is hanging there I tell you, and will die if you do not help him."

Then the men in a body dashed forward and bounded up the stairs, fumbling for knives in their pockets as they went. No man was eager to head his fellows and in a body they reached the fatal spot where all that remained of Cater Wadmore was hanging from a stout iron peg at the back of the huge wardrobe. They cut him down and laid him out upon the ground, but his eyes were filmy, his hands and face cold as clay, and all his scheming in this turbid world of ours was o'er.

But they endeavoured to restore him, and Doctor Danvers was hurriedly brought to the spot only to confirm their worst fears.

"He has been dead some hours," was his verdict. "You must send for the police. What has come to Haganhaugh—one owner ruined, another urged into suicide as soon as he takes possession of it. Is it accursed?"

Well might he repeat the question to himself when he went downstairs to the two women, the younger weeping, musing and tearing her hair in the frenzy of a passionate nature, humiliated, horrified and crushed, and the elder mumbling out the experiences of the past night in the manner of the insane.

"I saw him come out of his room," she said, dreading, looking at the doctor. "And I could see in his eyes what he was going to do. I followed him to the picture gallery ever so softly, but he saw me. 'Go back, old woman,' he said, 'and tell your daughter to come here in the morning.' I went back, but only to the dark shadow in the far end, and I saw him place a light and prepare, and then he did it, and I was held hand and foot by a spirit, who whispered in my ear, 'Let him die, let him die.' Oh, it is a brave story, and she," pointing at Lois, "deserves it all."

"Hush!" said the doctor. "You must not say that. We have no right to judge each other."

"She has judged me all her life," wailed the mad old woman. "And judged me harshly too. As a lisping child she defied me and called me wicked names. As a woman she has been a serpent in my breast. Is it not just for me to judge her now? Is it my fault that my love has been stung to death? Oh, it is a brave story. Reaping in as we have sown—reaping in as we have sown."

Lois heard her words but had no reply to offer. She could only weep and wail and rend those beautiful locks of hers in a frenzy of impotent despair. No thoughts of the wealth he might have left behind him were in her heart, only the thought that while she lived the curse of her husband's awful death would cling to her.

Hardened as she had ever been she could not shut her ears to the accusing voice that told her she had done it all. In her lay the root of the ghastly mischief that had been wrought.

The doctor sent off to his house for certain drugs and remained by her until they came. But she would take nothing.

"Unless you promise me that they will give me sleep for ever," she said. "I wish to die, to more than die, to be blotted out for ever—for ever."

He would not promise her that, and he let her rave on, hoping she would exhaust herself; but she was strong, and all that day the tears were renewed at intervals and the wailing never ceased. As the evening approached she grew calmer.

The clouds had broken up into fleecy masses on which rested the graduated hues of the set-

ting sun, a deep red in the West and a pale flesh tint in the far-off East, and a calm settling down upon all things.

Haganhaugh was freckled with splashes of sunlight, richest and most brilliant upon the latticed windows, the hands of the clock in the great tower were like burnished gold, every leaf of ivy and other creepers gathered its share of refulgent rays. A peaceful scene gazed upon by a woman from whom peace had fled.

There was a footpath across the park open to the villagers going to and fro, and across this came a ploughboy cheerily whistling. Lois stopped her ears, for the sounds bespeaking of lightness of heart were inexpressively irritating to her.

"All gay but me," she muttered. "Who in this wide world bears such a load as mine?"

A common cry, for we all think the burdens we have are the heaviest. Hers were heavy enough Heaven knows, but there were many as wearisome and others more so, as there has ever been since the day when our mother Eve opened her ears to the serpent. But the fact of others bearing heavy burdens makes ours none the lighter.

They must be borne, and if borne patiently great things will come. To bear sorrow with dignity is the lesson taught us by the Great Master, who at a moment of agony we poor mortals can never understand could yet appeal for mercy for his enemies.

Unhappily Lois was not likely to bear her sorrow well. She had always chafed at every little trial, and knew no joy save in gratification of her own sorrow. The calm upon her when evening came was only temporary—a lull in the storm of mortification and despair.

She watched the sun go down in a bed of dazzling light, and the specks of gold die out of the leaves of the trees, and as the heralding gloom of night came stealing up went to her mother's room, where the old woman was labouring under a change in her madness and talking of the delights of life like a giddy girl. She did not know Lois, but called her Blanche, which was the name of a sister of hers who had been dead for twenty years.

"The Carisbroke's ball will be a great thing to-night," she said, "all society will be there, and you and I, Blanche, must be there too. Lady Carisbroke has set her heart upon my marrying Lawstocke, who is a good fellow if not so rich as he might be."

"What are you talking about, mother?" demanded Lois, with something of the old hardness in her voice, "is it not time to have done fooling?"

"Done fooling?" said the old woman, with a giddy laugh. "Have done with the world when we have scarce entered it? My darling, Blanche, there is a long life before us—we may marry—and have children, and our children will be a joy—No, not a joy to me," she added, after a pause. "I feel that if I have a child it will be my curse."

"If this is a jest," Lois said, "have done with it," but while she spoke she read in her mother's eyes the record of her fate. The mother so long neglected, so wretchedly scorned and abused, but whose love was now yearned for, would never know her daughter again.

"It is my punishment," murmured Lois, as she turned away—"all have left me, and I am utterly ALONE!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CATER WADMORE'S CONFESSION.

And the long glare of aspired-to glories
Light me to my ghastly grave.

WITH the settled purpose of leaving his native land behind him for ever Paul Legarde went to London, and choosing a quiet hotel in the Strand, where he believed he should be out of the way of old friends and associates, he wrote to his agent desiring him to come and receive certain instructions for the management of his money and estate.

Pending his arrival he thought he would read the letter sent to him by Cater Wadmore, of

whose awful fate he was in ignorance. The papers that morning had an account of it, but Paul read no papers, although the obsequious waiter had placed them upon the breakfast table. His mind was wrapped in his own misery and misfortunes—he had not the heart to read of the woes of others.

The morning was yet early when he drew a couch up to a window overlooking the busy thoroughfare and sat down to read. He thought he could bear the reproaches he was sure the letter contained more easily if he had the bustle of life to look upon by simply raising his eyes.

On opening the envelope the letter proved to be more formidable than he anticipated. It was written closely on foreign paper, and the writing was as round and legible as the penmanship of a lawyer's clerk. Judging by the first glance Paul estimated that a good two hours' work was in his hand.

"There is more than the reproach of an injured man in this," he murmured, and began to read. The first few words gave him cause for an amazement that mingled with indignation—scorn and pity remained with him to the end.

The opening was very unceremonious, without any form of address such as "Dear sir," or "Dear Legarde," and it had a colloquial ring in it throughout.

"I have never liked you, because you were always a better man than I could ever hope to be. For a bad man to hate a good one is instinctive, and I hated you most cordially. I don't say that I have any love for you now, but as I shall never have another opportunity to do you justice in this world, and I do it only as a relief to myself, I will do so now."

"Have you not wondered who I am? Don't say you have not, for I know you have. Well, I will tell you: I am the son of a scoundrel, a born swindler, a card sharper, who finished his days at Dartmoor, and what his name was doesn't matter—anyhow it was not Wadmore. He was as good a fellow as a scoundrel can be, and did his best to make an honest man of me. He educated me entirely out of the proceeds of swindling, article me to a stock-broker with the same, and then told me to shift for myself, as he was getting old and could barely get enough for his own support."

"Eventually he failed to do that and descended to open robbery, which led to his incarceration. So you see I came of a swindling stock, and I was a swindler by instinct as you are a gentleman by instinct, and I went to work as soon as I was old enough to make money in the shady ways of rascals."

"I have made some in my time and I have spent it. As I write this I have not a penny in the world, but am bolstered up by bubble companies and forgery to a vast amount. When I am dead everything must come out; its great prop will be taken away, the companies will burst, the forgeries be discovered, and all that I owned be taken away. Even then I shall owe the world something—say half a million—a little more or less."

"And now to open out a little about yourself. You know that my wife was sweet on you before she married and that your engagement to Vida Haverland galled her terribly. So it did me, for I was in love with Vida, and Lois and I, reading each other's secret, hatched a plot for revenge, and a very pretty little plot, and so far successful, as you will see."

"You remember that night at Haganhaugh when you and Vida registered your vows under the mistletoe, and she gave you a small piece of the parasite plant to keep by you until you met again? I was present at the greater part of that intercourse, and it gave me a clue to the way to work a separation between you."

"I immediately went to Lois and made a bargain with her to marry me if I separated you from Vida. I have done so, as you know, and I have married Lois, although she meant to play double with me; but I won't bother you with that. I will keep for the present to what concerns you."

"How did I work that separation? Very simply. Do you remember Howard Stanton,

who was Mad. H. friends hope of He was owing m pressed

"Who Vida's her (he. member the East letter I like that got it so can unde of the B find the left their

"After persuad Then I, done, held o by turn

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"So my fier a smile phagm, —conse fear, a morrow

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"I never basel. Th usher with and "I

who was attached to the embassy with you? Mad. Howard had used to be called, and his friends got him sent away to Persia with the hope of never seeing him again, I should say. He was under my thumb in a variety of ways—owing me money being the main screw, and I pressed him into my service."

"What he did was very simple. He stopped Vida's letters to you and stopped yours to her (he had charge of the mail business, you remember), and only one envelope of yours from the East reached England. That contained no letter but only a sprig of mistletoe, as much like that Vida gave to you as it could be, and she got it some time before your return. Now you can understand the mystery of the disappearance of the Haverlands, and I don't think you will find them again without some trouble. They left their old house quite penniless, I believe."

"After the mischief was done I endeavoured to persuade Vida to marry me, and failed dismally. Then I married Lois, who knew all that had been done, and to whom I committed the power I held over the Haverlands. She exercised it by turning them promptly from Haganhaugh."

"I do not wish to make my wife out worse than myself, but the story of the Haverlands going abroad is false, and it was her invention. They are, I believe, in England still. We are a bad pair, I fear, and the prospect before us both is as bad as it can be. What is before me you will know soon. I do not think that there is a more miserable man than I am on the face of the earth. Turn which way I will there is nothing but darkness before me."

"I am alone, and the hour is late. Before me is a brandy bottle, the only friend I have on earth. It gives me a courage that is not my own, and enables me to think and write coolly now, and to face what lies immediately ahead. It matters little what it is, as it cannot be worse than the present."

"Sober I dare not think of death, but with my fiery friend within me I can look at it with a smile. The nervous contraction of the diaphragm, which materialists give two names to—conscience and fear—is stilled. I have no fear, and shall know none until I wake to-morrow."

"Awake when? How can I tell? I would rather sleep on for ever if I could, but I do not think it will come to that, and what is before me I must risk, as I can no longer live in the present. I leave behind me a name that will live in the history of scoundrelism. It is my own fault that it will not be placed among those of worthy men! I have had my chance to escape from knavish dealings and I threw it away. The end in its natural course has come. Adieu."

CATER WADMORE.

There was a short postscript that showed the man had the one spark of goodness that is attributed to all within him.

"Do not let Lois starve. She will suffer enough without having want for a companion."

When he had finished the perusal of this semi-flippant but wholly painful confession Paul Legarde carefully refolded it, returned it to the envelope, and with a sad expression upon his face rose and rang the bell.

"First," he muttered, "Vida must be found. I can never rest until she knows all. What mischief coming villainy can work, but nothing so sure as its own destruction."

The part of the letter concerning Cater Wadmore he scarce thought of, and failed to grasp more than that the man was ruined. All his mind was concentrated on that part which referred to himself and Vida. That such a plot should have been hatched and basely carried out was only one degree less incredible than the one-time presumptive baseness of Vida.

"It is all new to me," said Paul, wearily. "I never dreamed man or woman could be so base."

The waiter who responded to the bell also ushered in a grave, quiet, elderly gentleman, with an emphatic legal air about him. He and Paul shook hands.

"I am afraid that I cannot see you this morn-

ing after all, Mr. Crane," Paul said, "and must apologise for troubling you. Waiter, get me a hansom."

"There is no occasion to apologise to me," Mr. Crane said. "My time is yours, but it won't take long to run through the papers. I have them all in apple-pie order."

"Of that I am certain," Paul rejoined, "or they would not have the advantage of being arranged by you. I really do not think I can wait, as I have something of great importance to attend to. By the way, you may be able to assist me. You know I was engaged to Miss Haverland?"

Mr. Crane bowed. He was a bachelor and not much wrapped up in love matters, but he found a little interest on this occasion.

"An unhappy mistake, or something worse—it matters not which now—led to our estrangement," Paul continued. "I am now in a position to put myself right with her. But the whole family have disappeared."

"I have heard the story," Mr. Crane said, gravely. "A very sad one."

"The Haverlands must be found," Paul replied, "and that without delay. Can you assist me?"

"I believe I can," Mr. Crane said. "Are they in town?"

"How can I tell? They have simply disappeared from their old home."

"Leave all to me, sir," Mr. Crane said.

"Speaking of the Haganhaughs leads me to another subject," said Paul. "Do you know anything of Mr. Cater Wadmore's affairs?"

"They will be wound up in due course," the agent replied. "I hear strange reports afloat already. The whole city is alive with rumours. But they will not affect him."

"Why not?"

"Have you not read the papers this morning?"

"No."

Mr. Crane took one from the table, and after a cursory examination folded it down at a particular place, placing his finger upon a heading, "Suicide of Mr. Wadmore, the millionaire."

Paul read such brief words as had come to hand with horror. The details were very few, simply relating to a discovery of the body and manner of death. The compiler of the paragraph not being behind the scenes, conjectured that too much money had turned his brain.

"Too little, I fear," said Mr. Crane, shaking his head. "I never fully believed in him. We have had so many mushroom men of late years."

"I can confirm your impression with his own writing," Paul said. "Here is a letter he wrote to me, the last he wrote on earth, I think now, although it did not strike me at the time I read it. You will see how deeply I and Miss Haverland have been wronged."

Mr. Crane had never read a love story in his life until he read one that morning, and although there was only the darker side of it for his perusal he read every word with interest.

"A romance in real life," he said, as he refolded the paper; "and it will end as a romance ought to do. The wicked are punished and the good will be rewarded."

"I am not so sure of the second part," Paul said, sadly.

"Be of good cheer," replied Mr. Crane, "and if you are not made happy before the end of this week I will forfeit my agency—which is all I have to live upon and live for. No man could risk more upon a promise—all he has and all he loves."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FINIS.

Life's but a poor player
Who frets and struts his hour upon the stage
And then—is heard no more.

MR. CRANE being an astute man of business, and knowing how to go to work in tracking out a friend or enemy in many London, soon gained the information of the Haverlands having taken up their abode with Mrs. Stiffet. He therefore

informed Paul of what he deemed his success, and congratulated himself upon having done in three days what he had given himself a week to do.

Paul lost no time in calling upon Mrs. Stiffet, who happened to be sober, and in a very repentant state over the loss of her lodgers, particulars of which have already been recorded.

"Which I could see they was ladies and gentlemen," she said, "jest as soon as I can see what you are, sir; and maybe like you are related."

"Why did they leave here?" Paul asked.

"Well, sir," replied Mrs. Stiffet, putting her candour cap on, "it's not for me to notice everything, but I've eyes in my head, and people must live accordin' to means, for poor they were, and that's the honest truth, or I shouldn't have done so many out-of-the-way things for 'em, as poor people ought not in reason to have a servant of their own."

"And you do not know where they are gone?"

Paul asked.

"I do not at present, sir; but I may hear as I am out and about."

"If you should hear anything, my good woman, bring it to this address."

And Paul put his card, with the name of his hotel upon it, and a sovereign into Mrs. Stiffet's hand.

That sovereign was a bitter gift to her, for instead of being a joy and comfort to her it only opened out a view of what she might possibly have lost through her rash conduct to the Haverlands.

Paul was a rich relative, of course, seeking them out in their poverty, and if he had only found them there, sheltered under Mrs. Stiffet's motherly wing, what might he not have done for her?

"Given me an independence for life perhaps," she moaned. "I've heard of such things being done. But drat that boy of mine; it's all his fault, and he shall smart for it!"

It is only fair to record that Mrs. Stiffet kept her word, and her hopeful offspring found his home a bed of nettles for quite three days. After that it became what it had been before—a reposing place of rather thorny roses until other lodgers were secured, on whom he avenged himself in various ways peculiar to his volatile nature.

Mr. Crane was sorry to find he had failed after all. The prize on which he had humourously risked his all had slipped away at the moment it appeared within reach. But he had three days yet in hand, and he was prepared to make use of the nights also if the days did not suffice.

He took a couple of hours to arrange his plans, and then set out, leaving Paul in a fevered, anxious state. Paul, who for days had forgotten all about his wound, now found it troubling him again.

"Is there nothing I can do while you are away?" he asked his agent, as he was leaving.

After a moment's thought Mr. Crane suggested an advertisement in the papers, and on the following morning there appeared in the *Agency Column* an appeal to Vida.

"To V. of H—gan—h. I am not dead, but have returned to find that we have both been victims of treachery. All can be explained if you will only see or write to me. Address, Paul, at Stebbing's Hotel, Strand. Delay is insupportable."

He waited two days, and there came no response. Nor did he see or hear anything from Mr. Crane. That astute individual had evidently failed to find the track of the lost ones, or he would have sent a line by post or telegraph, or come in person with the good news.

"We shall never meet again," was Paul's despairing thought. "I have lost her for ever!"

He was in a very weak state, and the people at the hotel marked his illness. The chambermaid, a good-humoured, buxom lass, was of opinion that he was in consumption, and having a very womanly interest in the pale, handsome guest, asked the proprietor of the place

to suggest the propriety of having a doctor to him.

But Paul would have no doctor. Vida, he knew, was the only physician who could cure him, for his mental wound was deeper and more painful than his physical one.

"I am obliged to you," he said, in reply to the suggestion courteously made. "But there is nothing whatever the matter with me. If a message or messenger come for me let me know at once, no matter what the hour is."

The host bowed and retired, making a shrewd guess as to the cause of the guest's pale face and worried looks.

"It's a love affair," he said.

And the chambermaid who had admired Paul before adored him now, and wished with a curious pain near her honest heart that it had been in her power to bring back a smile to his lips and a colour to his cheeks.

At last the message came, late in the evening of the sixth day, in the form of a telegram dated from a waterside inn at Gravesend.

"COME at once. I have found them. Without you I can do nothing. To-morrow it may be too late."

There was little need for the stimulus of the last few words, although Mr. Crane was wise perhaps in administering it. Paul thrust the telegram into his pocket, put on his hat, and in a few moments was down at the door with the landlord at his heels.

"I suppose there is a train to Gravesend to-night?" he said.

"The last train is twenty minutes from this time," the landlord said, glancing at a clock in the hall.

Paul sprang into the street and jumped into a cab that was crawling by without checking it.

"London Bridge Station, Gravesend line," he cried, through the smartly-raised trap, "and a sovereign if you get me there in a quarter of an hour."

"It's done, sir," replied the cabman, and turning his horse he defied the law and its minion policemen by galloping over Waterloo Bridge and dashing between vehicles with a skill and recklessness rarely equalled and never excelled by the skilful and reckless driver of the London gondola.

The drive was an unbroken string of miraculous escapes for the cab from being upset, smashed, and totally destroyed, and a time of peril to the lives of driver and occupant; but nothing serious occurred, and with four minutes to the good the triumphant cabman deposited his fare at the station.

Paul, in his elation, gave him two sovereigns instead of one, and made him for the time the happiest Jehu in and out of London.

It was a slow journey to Gravesend with so many stoppages, and Paul suffered all the tortures of one in his position. He was inclined to think that the company had conspired with its servants to keep him from getting to his destination that night, and indulged in a few other eccentricities of irritation common to people who have good cause to hurry on and are compelled to travel by a train that stops at every station, and takes its time at last.

Gravesend at last, and the agent on the platform eagerly awaiting him. Paul sprang out and grasped his hand.

"Is all well?" he asked.

"All at present," replied Mr. Crane. "I've saved my name for keeping my promise too. Twelve minutes to spare."

"Where are they? Is it possible to see them at once?"

"The night is fine, and I think they would let us on board."

"On board?"

"Yes; they are on the *Lusitania* bound for New Zealand. She drops down with the early morning tide, and I think if you explain your business to the captain he will help you. The whole ship is in the bustle of getting ready to leave, and the passengers cannot have gone to their bunks yet. Poor things! they are going

third-class, and have taken agent's aid, and the colonel has given a bill for the amount."

While the agent was explaining this much they were hurrying down to the riverside, where they soon found a waterman, who, for a fare that was at least six times the amount the law allowed him, agreed to row them out to the vessel whose big hull was indicated by the lights moving to and fro.

Paul was silent until the *Lusitania* was reached, and after a little parly with an officer on the companion he was admitted on board. The captain was on the point of turning in for a couple of hours, but on receiving a message Paul sent he courteously consented to see him.

The object of the late call was briefly explained and a description of the passengers given.

The colonel had entered himself under the name of Hope, the agent said, and a message was despatched for Mr. Hope to come to the captain's cabin.

Paul sat down in a corner of the snug little apartment so that his face was partly in shadow and remained there until Colonel Haverland, with pale face and weary eyes, entered. He did not even notice Paul.

"Your name is Colonel Haverland, I believe?" the captain said.

"I have entered myself on the list in the name of Hope and I wish to retain it," the colonel replied.

"A friend of yours is here," said the captain, and Paul advanced with outstretched hand.

"Colonel," he said, "I am alive, you see. Vida and I have been shamefully wronged. We have been the victims of a plot. When you know all you will look again at me with the friendly eyes of old."

"Your conduct certainly requires explanation," the colonel said, stiffly.

The hand outstretched to him was for the present ignored.

"May I trespass here a few minutes more?" Paul asked the captain.

"As long as you please," was the amiable reply, "only you must excuse me if I turn in, as I want a couple of hours' rest. Your talking won't disturb me."

While he was throwing off some of his outer garments Paul condensed the story into a very short narration and produced in proof the confession of Cater Wadmore.

The colonel listened with great emotion, and when he finished brushed a hand across his eyes.

"My dear boy," he said. "You can only guess what an inexpressible joy it is to me to find you alive and honest and true. What it will be to Vida you will know soon. But we cannot live upon your bounty. We are penniless."

"I would not be sure of that," Paul answered.

"If you can prove, as I believe you will be able to, that Wadmore wronged Haganhaugh from you by fraud, you will be able to regain it. But we cannot discuss it here. You must come ashore with me, all of you."

And the colonel consented, as any sane man would have done, and a few minutes later Paul and Vida met upon the deck, and shielded by a friendly pile of luggage he held her to his heart and kissed away her tears.

"By the way," said Beaumont, as they were getting into the boat, "we were not the only swells among the sons of toil in the fore cabin. There is a fellow of the Bengal Cavalry, Martingale I think he told me his name was, who seems to be in mighty trouble, and thinks to run away from it by going to the Antipodes."

"I know the name," said Paul. "At least by repute, and his story too. Stay here for me a moment, he must go ashore with us."

He was gone longer than a moment or a minute. It was quite half an hour, and Vida was getting alarmed about her lover's safety when he returned, bringing with him the repentant husband, who had yielded to Paul's urging to return to his wife.

"Your going away," Paul told him, "shows your ignorance of woman. Your wife will not

only forgive you but she will love you none the less for showing how an unpremeditated sin alone could create such a keen remorse within you."

And then he yielded, and the rude barque of the waterman bore back to the shore six of the happiest and most hopeful people in the wide world, and one of the most satisfied in the person of Mr. Crane who looked upon it as a business man and thought it all very creditable to his energy and acuteness, a conclusion nobody is likely to quarrel with.

It was not long before there was light at Haganhaugh once more. The law had raised its strong arm in behalf of the Haverlands and the noble mansion was theirs again. Such new things as had been put into it were removed and one piece of the old furniture put away in a disused room alone. That was the wardrobe from the picture gallery, destined doubtless to figure long in the annals of a ghostly story.

But the Haverlands were not superstitious. They cared little for the prospect of the spectre of Cater Wadmore appearing. He had injured them sufficiently in life and would not trouble them after death.

They bore him no ill will—the grave was a barrier to it—and in Christian charity saw that he rested in a grave among others "with the sure and certain hope of resurrection" (and who shall dare deny it to the weakest and most erring?) and placed a plain tomb over him with only his name and the date of his death upon it.

There is mirth at Haganhaugh, for it is the eve of Paul and Vida's wedding-day and the house is filled with light-hearted guests, among whom Captain Martingale and his wife are to be seen. Light-hearted laughter rings in the rooms, and every servitor down to the grumpy groom is in the highest spirits, for has not the king—that is the colonel—got his own again?

And now is the eve of the New Year, and the bells are ringing out the sorrows of the past and ringing in the joys of the future. The musical voices of the bells come pealing across the snow up to the room where Paul and Vida stand by the fireside alone.

"The old year is dying," he says, "and the new one is marching in. God bless and help all people in the new year."

"God bless and help poor Lois," Vida says, and their lips meet, while their hearts throb with happiness that no words can express.

And the woman on whom they call a blessing—where is she? Wandering away in a foreign land, hurrying from the past that will cling to her heels as closely as the mad, muttering old woman who gave her birth. She knows that a bounteous hand has saved her from want, but no riches can stave off the cries of conscience, and for her there is no peace or rest until she finds it in the grave.

[THE END.]

SCIENCE.

PRESERVING MEAT BY INJECTION.—Herr Wickersheimer, whose patent for the preservation of organic substances, it will be remembered, was lately bought by the Prussian Government, has now patented the following process for preserving meat for eating purposes. A solution (heated to 50 deg. C.) of 36 grammes potash, 15 gr. common salt, and 60 gr. alum, in 3 litres of water, is mixed with a second solution of 9 gr. salicylic acid in 45 gr. methylic alcohol, in which 250 gr. glycerine is added. With this liquid the animal to be preserved is injected. In the case of small animals 100 gr. of the liquid for every 1 kilogr. body weight is recommended; in larger the proportion may be reduced to 40 gr. Fishes, birds, and such small animals are not previously killed, but the injection made direct into the heart with a syringe having a sharp canula. Large animals are injected immediately after slaughtering, the liquid being introduced by one of the large cervical arteries. For cattle and swine 2 to 3 gr. saltpetre is added

to the liquid. The flesh of animals so treated keeps (it is said) two to three weeks perfectly good and inodorous. If the preservation is to be for a longer time the proportions of methylic alcohol, salicylic acid and glycerine are somewhat increased.

THE UTILISING OF THE TIDES.—A Philadelphia engineer has invented, it is claimed, a machine by which the power of the tides can be utilised. Numerous plans have been proposed for the accomplishment of this most desirable end, but only under exceptional conditions have they been practical or economical. If the new device can harness the tide in an open channel, so as to convert any considerable portion of the vast power into working force, the inventor will rank among the great benefactors of humanity. Emerson says somewhere: "Hitch your waggon to a star." A device for utilising mechanically the free tides, as they sweep along our shores, would come next to that, since it would enable us, through converters and carriers of electricity, to hitch our waggons to the sun and moon.

NEW DOMESTIC WARMING AND COOKING AGENT.—The Prall Company propose to warm towns by means of superheated water. In New York recently this company gave a dinner to the Society of Civil Engineers, for which all the viands were cooked by means of superheated water. The company proposes to supply houses with water heated to a temperature of 376 deg. Fahr. It is asserted that water of this temperature can be conveyed a mile in boxed-in pipes without losing more than two degrees of temperature; and as no cooking range will be at a greater distance than one mile from the generator, it is claimed that sufficient heat for all the purposes of the cook and for warming houses can be furnished without the necessity of fires. The water is sent through the system at such a rate that the complete circuit is made in fifteen minutes.

A NEW COLOURING MATTER.—If carbon disulphide is agitated with semi-fluid sodium amalgam, and if the paste-like mass is mixed with water, there is produced a hyacinth-red liquid, whilst mercury and mercury sulphide are deposited. The solution contains a sodium salt of a yet unknown acid, somewhat soluble in hot water, and more readily in alcohol. It dyes yellow, orange, and brown shades on wool and silk.

VERA'S VENTURE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XL.

MIS DARLING.

They sin who tell us love can die,
With life all other passions fly—
All others are but vanity.

The Wellington was a safe theatre—the safest in London, people said. There were fire-proof doors and iron curtains and all the modern appliances for defying the most terrible enemy of the theatrical manager. There were fire buckets and hose and smartly-dressed firemen parading about the place from the opening of the doors till the next morning, and yet, in spite of all the precautions—and they were genuine and minute—the Wellington was burning to the ground with fearful rapidity on the eventful night when Belton Leicester arrived in London in search of Nellie.

How the catastrophe came about no one knew. Everything had seemed safe and well at the beginning of the performance, which consisted now of a new piece, a short one, in which Miss Darlington appeared, and the opening of the pantomime. The grand spectacle which was to do so much had not been the success that the manager hoped. People who saw it declared it was too good, too refined to suit the taste of the public; anyway, they did not come to see it, and Mr. Bryant found it expedient to put up something else.

That something was Amy Darlington in a slight piece written expressly for her, and business was steadily improving. Her old friends came to see her, and the glitter and brilliance of the pantomime opening, considerably and judiciously compressed, drew the gallery folk.

"I hate the theatre in pantomime time," she said to Nellie, as they drove along to her business. "I would not have played till the place was clear of all the extra mob but that I knew I should do Mr. Bryant a service, and he has been a good friend to me. There's a flavour of the music-hall and circus about it all till the burlesque people have gone, and I am something nervous too."

"Nervous?"

"Just that."

"What about?"

"Fire."

"Fire! Surely there is no danger of that at the Wellington?"

"There's always danger while the pantomime is going on. The firemen are very pretty to look at, and the buckets and hose are in apple-pie order, but the men can't be in every part of the place at once, and it is all old and rickety at the back of the stage. My dressing-room, for instance, is part of an old house, and so are all those on the opposite side."

This was true. The Wellington was a modern theatre, and had been rebuilt within a very few years, but at the back there was a lot of space that had been houses and had been turned into dressing-rooms, and Mr. Bryant had let them remain. It was in one of these that the fire broke out—no one ever knew how—and the whole of the back of the stage was in a blaze before anyone could do anything to check the progress of the flames.

It was conjectured that someone was setting the rules of the theatre at defiance and smoking in the dressing-room. The corner where the fire first broke out was appropriated to the extra men who had been engaged for the pantomime. A separate passage led to it, and Miss Darlington, in going to her own handsomely-appointed dressing-room, never came in contact with any of them, but the rooms were very near each other for all that. They were all part of the same old building, and fire in any one of them would rapidly communicate with the others.

The little piece was over, and the actress had removed her glittering robes and was sitting resting and having her hair brushed. She had plenty of time, and she and Nellie were chattering in true girlish fashion of the people in front and theatrical matters in general. They were more like friends than mistress and dependent. Miss Darlington had found Nellie very useful, and she made her her constant companion, learning not a little from the quiet teaching of the lonely girl's lady-like, graceful ways and faultless taste.

"There was a yellow wig in the royal box to-night," said Miss Darlington, with a laugh, "that I must certainly have copied. It was the most wonderful erection I ever saw. There were strings of pearls all about it, and a dress almost the same colour underneath it. I wonder whom the box was lent to?"

"Was it a young lady?"

"Oh, my dear, no, such an antiquated gorgon, all rouge and make-up. The wig was just the colour of a singed—"

She stopped suddenly, and her eyes dilated.

"What is the matter?" asked Nellie.

"Listen."

A curious roaring sound somewhere very near them and a haze in the room like a thin mist.

"Fire!" gasped Amy Darlington. "The theatre is on fire!"

For a moment Nellie stood petrified. She could not believe it, and then she rushed to the door. The room itself had a double door, and beyond that there was a tiny lobby, and then a door into the passage. There was no fear of the popular favourite catching cold from draughts.

With the opening of the inner door there came a thicker volume of smoke into the room. Then the outer one was opened and she was in the little lobby. She could see light from the outside and hear the crackling of flames. She

pulled open the last door, to see the passage beyond a seething mass of fire, and to know that there was no means of escape that way. She had the presence of mind to shut it again and the two others after her; but the dense smoke was filling every corner now, and the three women could hardly breathe.

The window was shut and had heavy iron shutters, part of Mr. Bryant's care for his property, and Nellie did not know how to unfasten them. Amy Darlington seemed helpless with terror. Her fear of fire was a disease, and the dresser had crouched into a corner and was hiding her face, moaning that she would be burnt.

Almost blinded by the smoke and suffocating, for the night was cold and every crevice carefully stopped up, Nellie fumbled for the spring of the shutter, in vain, as it seemed. She could not find it. She was giving herself up for lost, despairing like the miserable woman in the corner, when all of a sudden she found it and the shutter flew up with a run.

Hardly knowing what she did she beat out the glass of the window and shrieked as well as her dry tongue and choking throat would let her. The street below was crowded with people, and in a moment a ladder was raised, and men swarmed up it, sending in the window frame with a crash and Nellie was lifted in a pair of strong arms.

"My darling! my darling!" she heard a voice say, and then warm lips touched her cheek, and, unless she were dreaming, tears as well, and then she knew no more, and it seemed as if the world and all else had slipped away from her for ever.

"No lives lost, thank God," were the first words she heard when she began to understand once more that she was still alive and very bruised and sore from her efforts to open the window. "It might have been worse after all."

She was at home now in her friend's house, and Miss Darlington was there too, very pale and frightened, but nothing the worse; and sitting by the sofa where Nellie lay was Belton Leicester. She put out her hand to him—she could only use one, for the other had come to grief in breaking the window. She forgot all that had passed since they met, and was unfeignedly glad to see him.

"How did you come here?" she asked.

"I came to find you," he replied. "It is awful to think how I found you."

"Was it you who—"

"Pulled you through the window? Yes."

There was something in his eyes that recalled the low-spoken, tender words and the kiss that she had felt, and she blushed ruby red at the recollection.

"I owe my life to you," she said.

"Hardly. I should have been of very little use without the firemen. They made no more of the business of carrying you ladies down the ladder than if you had been so many kittens. I suppose practice makes perfect even at that sort of thing."

"Ugh!" said Amy Darlington, shuddering. "I shall have the feeling on me to my dying day of being taken down that ladder. I wish I had fainted like you, Nellie, and known nothing about it—the fire overhead, and the distance to the street below, and the fear that the man would drop me."

"No fear of that," Belton Leicester said. "When I was a lad knocking about London I saw a fireman bring down a woman in his arms and a baby in his teeth at the same time, and from a far greater height. They know their business."

He talked nervously, and as if he hesitated to approach the subject nearest his heart, the business that had brought him to London. Nellie was found, and with the sight of her dear face his courage had vanished.

"I am charged to take her back with me," he said to the actress. "You will have to spare her to her old friends."

"To take me back? Where?" asked Nellie.

"To Milverstone."

"Oh, no, not there. I could not go there."

"Oh, yes, you can. The squire wants you."

"Is he well again?"

"As well as he ever will be. I am to take you straight to his house. They are counting the hours till they see you again. Oh, if you had only known how you were being sought for."

"I should have only tried the more to hide myself perhaps," Nellie said, sadly. "I could not bear to see Milverstone again."

"Not as its mistress?"

"That can never be."

"The squire says it can. He will not say more till he has you there by his side. Don't look so frightened. I know nothing of myself. I only repeat his words to me, and his mind is as collected as yours or mine. He says you shall go back to the Grange again as what you are—Sir Darcie's daughter."

Nellie looked at him and shook her head sadly.

"That can never be," she said. "He must be wandering in his mind. If that were so Mr. Venables would have set it right if it could have been done. He loved me—Sir Darcie I mean, and—"

"Call him your father, Nellie," Belton Leicester said, her name slipping from his lips unconsciously, and sounding so sweetly in her ears. "You are his daughter, and Milverstone will welcome you as such."

"I shan't thank you for taking her from me," Miss Darlington said. "She has been a treasure to me. But I always had a notion that I should lose her in this fashion. I could not believe that the story of the succession was a true one somehow."

There was not much sleep for Nellie that night. Mr. Leicester left them with the intimation that he should be at the house at the earliest possible hour the next morning to take her back with him if she were able to go; and she lay through the long hours wondering if it were not all some wild dream from which she should awaken to her duties again with no fresh thoughts of Milverstone and the friends there.

It was all true. Mr. Leicester came as early as he could, and in a very short time she was driving through the streets with him to find Mr. Venables, and if possible get him to come to Springfield with them.

That he could not do, but he promised to follow them as soon as he was able, and Nellie had to travel down under Mr. Leicester's protection alone. He was very silent through the journey, and gloomy too Nellie thought, though she herself was preoccupied and distraught. As well she might be. It was not so long since she had left Springfield a fugitive and an outcast without the slightest hope of ever returning to it.

"What a lot of people," she exclaimed, as they neared the station. "What is the matter?"

She soon found out. They had come there to see and welcome her. Belton Leicester had telegraphed the welcome news that she was found, and Mrs. Blennerhasset had not kept it a secret. Whether she was mistress of Milverstone or not did not matter to the people who had known and loved her all through her young life, and she was hugged and kissed and had her hands nearly shaken off when she alighted from the train and made her way to the squire's carriage that was waiting for her.

And Neville Delamere and his wife saw and heard it all as they were driving by on their way to an afternoon tea some miles away.

CHAPTER XLII.

CRUMPLED ROSE LEAVES.

I swear 'tis better to be lowly born
And range with humble livers in content
Than to be purged up in a glistering grief
And wear a golden sorrow.

TRULY Neville Delamere might have often quoted the above somewhat trite passage to himself since his assumption of the master's place at the Grange. He was terribly anxious, always afraid of something, he did not know what, suddenly cropping up to end his reign.

His splendour, and Vera took care he should have enough of it, was embittered by a Damocles sword that seemed to be always hanging over his head and threatening to fall with every adverse breath that blew upon him and his haughty wife. Betty Bird was a constant thorn in the flesh to him, and he often entreated Vera to get the obnoxious old woman out of the country.

"Better spend a couple of thousand on her than have her here getting drunk and using her tongue," he said one day after a curious report had reached them on sundry things Mrs. Bird had been saying in the village.

She was by no means the miserable creature now that she was when Mr. Leicester first encountered her. She and her disreputable daughter had come to live in the village, where they held their own and paid their way and for the most part behaved themselves. But there were times when Betty broke out. When the demon of drunkenness has once taken hold of anyone, woman or man, it is a spirit not easily exorcised, and though Betty was very penitent, or professed to be so, whenever she exceeded, she did do it sometimes, and kept Mr. Delamere on thorns for fear of what she might do or say in her maudlin madness.

Vera laughed at his fears, and declared Betty could do them no harm, but he had not his wife's bravery, or rather callousness and indifference.

"I couldn't get her to go I fancy," she replied to his entreaty. "And besides I am not sure she is not safer here."

"Safer, when he talks as she does. I heard only yesterday that she said—"

"Yes, I daresay," she says all sorts of mad things I know. But it is because she talks so that she is better here. Everybody knows her and laughs at her. Fancy her saying the things she does anywhere else, people would open their ears directly. You do far more harm than Betty, going about with such a long face as you do."

"I can't help it, my beauty. There's mischief brewing, I am sure of it, and that fellow Leicester is at the bottom of it."

"Mr. Leicester hates me I know," Vera replied, scornfully. "But he cannot turn me out of the Grange for all that."

And she believed what she said. She deemed herself as secure in her new possession as the queen on her throne, and would have liked to set the whole world at defiance, Betty Bird notwithstanding.

Only the very day after this conversation Neville Delamere and his wife met the squire and Mrs. Blennerhasset as they were walking on the road that skirted the estate. It was the squire's first drive and he was lying back in a little low pony carriage propped up with cushions. Neville would have gone forward to greet him, but he was stopped by the unmistakable look of scorn and aversion on the old man's face, and the stony gaze of his aunt, who seemed as if she did not see them at all.

"Cut, by Jove," he said, with a little laugh, as the carriage drove past and they were left standing in the road. "I did not think auntie had the pluck to do it. Never mind, Mrs. Delamere, they will come round in time."

"I don't want them to come round, as you call it," Vera said, with a toss of her head. "They will never be able to do or undo anything as far as we are concerned. I don't fancy there will be much coming round for that old man. He looks as if he were half dead already."

There was more vitality in the squire than she imagined, quite enough to recognise her husband and to notice HER.

"Is that the woman?" he asked, as they passed the couple.

"Yes, dear."

"A cruel, hard woman. Thank Heaven that has restored me before it was too late. When will that poor child be found I wonder? Surely Leicester will not fail."

"Not he; he loves the very ground she walks upon. If she is alive he will find her. And I think Nellie will love him," Mrs. Blen-

nerhasset said, gravely. "I used to have a notion she admired him very much before he went away. It was a woman's fancy perhaps, but I had begun to conclude she saw her mistake in taking Neville, poor fellow," and the good lady sighed, for she did not like to think of the lad she had reared having turned out such a scamp.

"Poor fellow, indeed!" the squire said, inactively. "He is a scoundrel, my dear, and nothing else."

"Yes, I know; but he is my sister's son, and I loved him. I was so happy when he took up with poor Nellie, and was going to be the master at the Grange; and now—"

"And now he is master there, but it won't be for long. Don't worry about him, my dear; it will be a lesson to him. A little adversity will do him no harm. Your nephew will be all the better for the lesson that is coming to him."

"I don't see how any man can be the better for association with such a woman as that."

"There may be good in her in spite of what she has done," the squire said. "And how she has done it is a mystery to me. I hope Leicester can throw some light upon it."

"I don't see how."

"Nor I yet, but he knows more than he will tell I am sure. I suspect he does not see his way; when he does, depend upon it, he will speak."

"Speaking will do no good if he does not find Nellie."

"He will find her, I feel sure of it. His heart is in the work remember."

A telegram was waiting for them when they reached home. Nellie was found and safe and was coming down by the afternoon train. Trains to Springfield were but few in the day, and "the afternoon train" was intimation enough. The carriage was sent to meet her and half Springfield went with it.

"I can't go," Mrs. Blennerhasset said, tearfully. "I should break down before everybody and make a fool of myself. Dear child, I must wait till she is here to welcome her."

Neville Delamere and his wife were bidden to an afternoon tea that day at the house of some new people some miles distant. They had hailed the invitation with delight, though neither of them particularly affected that form of entertainment, but they deemed it a step in the right direction. It would perhaps be the beginning of a new footing for them amongst the people who had ignored them till now, and lead to their being invited to the houses they most wished to enter as guests.

This fashion of afternoon tea in winter had gained ground in the neighbourhood since some of the county people had brought the custom from London. It was really far more than the social gathering which precedes the dinner hour in London. It was more like the good old-fashioned "high tea" of the middle classes, and often took the place of dinner. It drew together many people who would otherwise never meet and was the means of promoting a great deal of friendly intercourse between families who did not care for the more formal and expensive arrangements of dinner giving.

Vera argued that people who met them at a friendly gathering like this would hardly ignore them in the future, and she prophesied all sorts of pleasant things from the invitation, and arrayed herself in her most bewitching attire to do honour to her host and hostess.

Very lovely indeed she looked when she came down dressed for the occasion; it pleased her to put on ruby velvet and fur, and a little cap to match which sat jauntily on her head and made her look like a disguised queen as she sat in the carriage by her husband's side.

An open carriage, for it was a bright, clear day, and the air was invigorating and fresh, and Vera knew full well how brilliant it made her complexion look to have the cool wind blow on it.

They could have it closed she said when they felt cold, and in the meantime she was determined that Springfield should have the benefit of her handsome dress and her haughty beauty. Towards the station they saw many people hurrying along, as if to meet the train that was

even now steaming in, and all of them with pleased faces and cheerful voices.

"What is going on?" she asked, in surprise, for she had not heard of any unusual event being in prospect.

"Someone is expected evidently," her husband said, "someone for Raybrook too—there is the carriage."

It certainly was the squire's carriage, but then that was sent for Sir Marcus Judd when he came; it might be the great London doctor, but then Springfield, a phlegmatic sort of place generally, would hardly turn out to meet him in such force as this.

"What is it, Parsons?" Vera asked, as the driver turned his head to look at a fresh group in the road.

"I can't make out, ma'am."

"Stop and ask someone then."

She wished the next moment that she had bade him drive on instead, for the answer came quick and clear from the man spoken to.

"It's Miss Nellie, bless her; she's a coming home in that there taxi, and she's going to Squire Blennerhasset's. And they do say she'll come into her own again before long. There she is! Hooray!"

And totally regardless of the fact that he had aired his opinions in the hearing of the present owners of Milverstone, he rushed off to join the excited throng at the station.

The road lay high, and from where they had stopped they could see down into the crowd that surrounded Nellie and Belton Leicester, they could see the handshakings and the greetings and hear the words of welcome that made themselves heard even above the din of joy and heart-felt gladness.

"Drive on," bawled Neville Delamere, angrily. "Let's get out of this. You see us in it. We might have been sure of it. There is no mischief that he has not a hand in."

"What has he to do with it?" Vera asked, contemptuously. "Why do they make him their messenger? Don't shake and look white like that," she added, for her husband's face had blanched and he was visibly trembling. "A hundred Belton Leicesters could not do us any harm."

"I am not so sure of that. I fancy he knows more than he will say. I have always thought so."

Vera laughed scornfully, but the remembrance of Nellie's arrival and the way in which she had been greeted remained with her during the whole afternoon.

She was secure in her possession of Milverstone, Nellie could do nothing to oust her from there; but it was not pleasant to hear her discussed as she accidentally did during the progress of the festivities.

"So they have found the poor girl that was lost," she heard one gentleman say to another, as the guests were sauntering about the pretty rooms in an interval of the amusements provided. "There was quite a commotion at Springfield as we passed through. They seem to swear by 'Miss Nellie,' as they call her, and the rustics have got hold of a report that she is not only come back but that the Milverstone succession is going to be upset in her favour again."

"I think that's a chimera," was the reply. "The present owner seems to have established her right pretty securely. I have heard a lot of gossip about it. They say—though where the convenient 'they' may be I have not the slightest idea—that Squire Blennerhasset is taking the matter up and can prove her right to her name and fortune. I wish he may, poor child, she was very hardly used, and I fancy her successor is not much liked."

The "successor," hidden from view by a curtain and a stand of flowers, heard all this and tore her gloves in her impotent rage.

"I am tired," she said to her husband, meeting him directly after. "We will go home as soon as you like."

The undefined dread that was filling his heart was taking possession of hers also, and she longed to be at home and alone to think matters over and to plan how she could best meet the trouble that she felt was coming.

CHAPTER XLIII.

LIGHT THROUGH THE DARKNESS.

"Tis strange but true, for truth is always strange—Stranger than fiction."

If there were gloom and discomfort at the Grange—and Vera was very gloomy after her return from the afternoon tea, she had a bad headache she said, and went to her room—there were joy and loving affection at Raybrook.

Mrs. Blennerhasset welcomed Nellie with open arms and tearful eyes, and there was all a mother's love in the way in which she folded the girl to her loving heart and called her her own darling.

"Why did you not come to us?" she said, when she had taken her upstairs to the room that had been provided for her; "there was a home for you here, Nellie."

"I could not stay," faltered Nellie. "I heard all about it. I knew that I had no right to stay, and I had lost Neville. Ah, don't think I begrudge him to her now," she added, with a warm blush. "That was the best thing that ever happened to me. It would not have been happiness for either of us."

"It wouldn't for you at any rate. Ah! my child, this has been a miserable business for us all—you gone and that impostor in your place. Springfield has felt it I can tell you."

"It is because you are so good to me that you call her an impostor," Nellie said, gently. "She is not that, you know—Milverstone is here."

"Milverstone is no such thing—it is yours. The squire says so, and he knows. Yes, we will go to him directly, he is anxious to see you, but I would not let him come out till you were rested a little. He is quite himself, but he is weak still, and excitement is bad for him."

Nellie thought in her heart that Mrs. Blennerhasset was exaggerating. It was very pleasant to be here again, and to see her old friends once more, but in spite of what Belton Leicester had said to her at Miss Darlington's house she could not help believing that it was only the love they bore her and their anxiety to see her righted that had produced the notion that she was indeed entitled to the Grange. How could anything be plainer than what she had heard from the lawyers and her own uncle as well—at least Sir Darcie's brother?

She was delighted and surprised at the change for the better in the squire. When she had seen him last he had been lying insensible, with but small chance as it seemed of recovery. Now he was himself again, weaker and older looking than of yore perhaps, but with a head as clear as ever.

"Welcome back, my dear girl," he said. "I won't say welcome back to the Grange till I see you there. It will not be many days before that comes about."

"I wish I could believe it," Nellie said.

"You may, child, it is true."

Mr. and Mrs. Deacon came presently to welcome her, and several other people to whom the news of her return was a pleasure indeed, and they were quite a comfortable party at the nice dinner that Mrs. Blennerhasset had ordered in honour of the arrival.

"Where is Mr. Leicester?" she suddenly asked. He was missing from amongst the guests.

He had said something about a critical case that he had to visit, one of the servants said, and had gone away while Miss Nellie was upstairs with the squire.

"Critical fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Deacon, with her usual sharp way of retort. "There isn't a single critical case in the place; there isn't an accident or a megrim of any sort that need take him away. He does not want to be made a lion of that's all, and all the village knows about last night's work."

"He saved my life," Nellie said, with tears in her eyes. "How shall I ever repay it?"

"I think you will find that out some time, child," the rector's wife said. And Nellie blushed furiously and said no more.

Everyone here seemed to have read her thoughts, and she remembered the passionate

"my darling" that had sounded in her ears as she was being carried out of the blazing theatre.

"Oh! if Milverstone were only mine and I could give it to him!" she thought, as she sat silent and preoccupied over her dinner. "Why did he go away? I have hardly spoken to him yet. I have never thanked him."

It was Milverstone, or rather the notion of her again inheriting it, that was coming between them now. He was at home, no case but his own demanding his attention, and his was sickness enough.

"How can I bear it?" he said to himself. "How can I stay here and see her there again, and keep my love to myself? I cannot say to her 'Come home to me, my darling,' as I could have done if I had found her poor and unfriended. I must go; I cannot remain to be drawn into temptation and seem like that villain yonder, a mean fortune hunter. I will but stay to give what evidence I can, and then I will see her no more. I will leave the country; there are doctors wanted for emigrant ships and there is room for a lonely wretch like me in the other hemisphere. The bells that ring for her welcome home again shall be the knell of my life here. I have stayed here too long for my peace of mind already."

The squire said nothing on this first night of what he meant to do. Nellie must rest, he said, and the morrow would do for all he had to clear up. The mystery should be cleared, they might rest assured of that. His wife had hardly been able to make him out during the past few days, he had been so unlike himself. He had asked questions till she said he had nearly driven her mad.

Not a single item of intelligence had he allowed to escape him. All about Betty Bird and her sudden good fortune had been gone over to him more than once, and Belton Leicester's story of her curious emotion on hearing of Vera's accession to the estates of the Grange had been carefully repeated to him.

"I see light!" had been his exclamation when he had well weighed the matter in his own mind, and to his wife's question of whence the light came and what it was about he only replied:

"Find the child and you shall hear all about it."

No sign of doubt or hesitation appeared in anything he did, he was sure of what he had to do he declared, and would bide his time.

Betty Bird in her comfortable home had no idea of the storm that was gathering over her devoted head than had any of the idlers about the village, who had got hold of a vague report that Miss Nellie was to come back to Raybrook, but not a hint of anything further.

It was something astonishing to Mrs. Bird to be waited upon by a liveried servant from Mr. Blennerhasset's, and desired to present herself at Raybrook without delay. She was a very different person now from the miserable wretch she had been.

All the village knew that Mrs. Delamere was very kind to her, and she declared in her cups—in which state she appeared much seldomer than formerly—that she was of vital importance to the lady of the Grange. But the intelligence was mostly doubted, Betty went so very wide of the truth when she had been drinking.

"Squire Blennerhasset wants me, does he?" she said, sharply, to the man.

"Yes, he does."

"What for?"

"That's his business. You had better be quick, he don't seem in a waiting mood this morning."

"Why, what's up?"

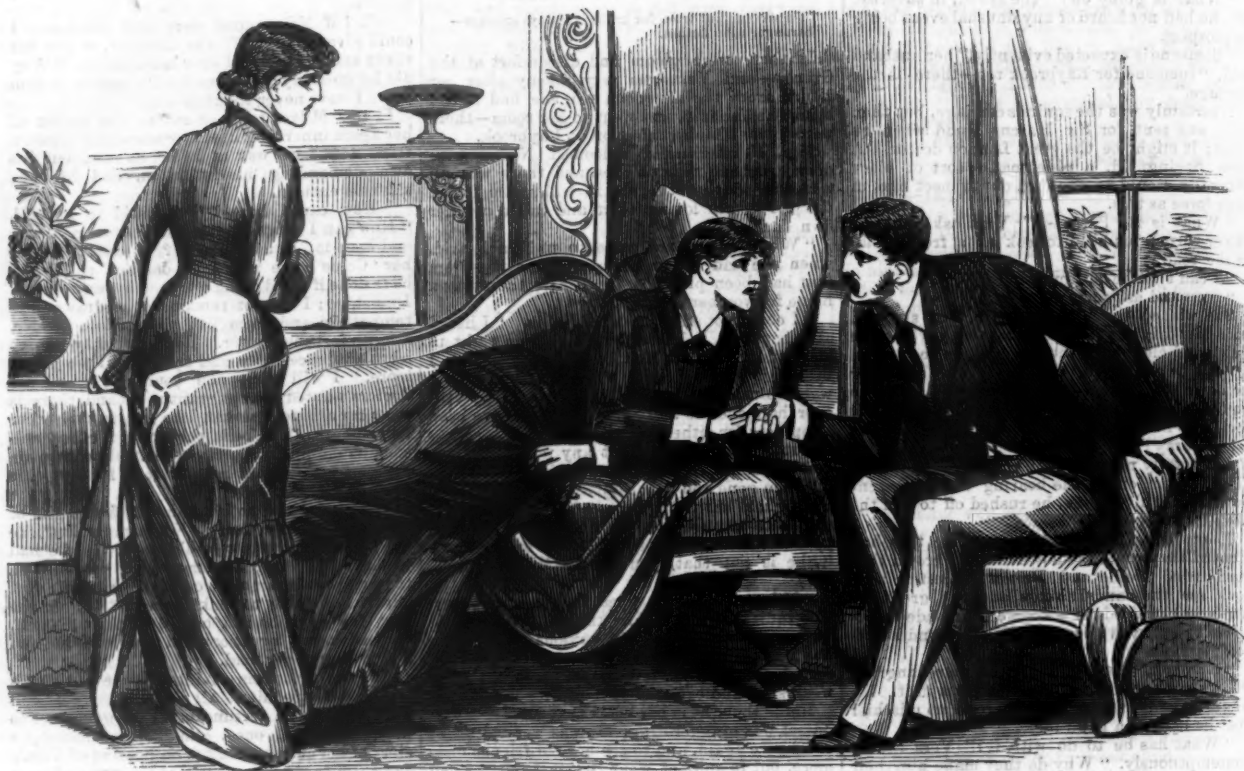
"I don't know, but I was to ask you to be quick."

"And suppose I won't come at all, what then?"

"I think you had better, the squire don't like to be crossed; besides—"

"Besides what?"

"I think he means to make you if you won't," the man replied, rather ambiguously. "It's important."



[SAVED BY HIS ARM.]

Mrs. Bird was intensely curious, but not at all alarmed. She had no idea that she was wanted for anything particular, and she decked herself out in her most gorgeous array, not forgetting the watch and the silk gown, and bade the man say that she would be at Raybrook as soon as she could get there.

He told her courteously enough that he had a conveyance waiting for her, and that his orders were to take her with him. Betty demurred for a moment, then yielded—she would have liked to call at the Grange on her road, and that was exactly what Mr. Blennerhasset wanted to prevent.

No one knew of her expedition till one of the Grange servants told Vera's maid that he had seen her in the Raybrook trap going there, and the woman conveyed the intelligence to her mistress.

"And a pretty way my lady was in about it," she said, afterwards. "Just like she was the day that old woman first came here. There is something wrong."

Betty Bird thought so when she was taken into the squire's room and found there not only Mr. Blennerhasset and his lady, but her *bête noir*, Mrs. Deacon, and the parson, to say nothing of Belton Leicester and Nellie.

She greeted the company with considerable nonchalance—it was none of her role now to be humble as she had been when it suited her in the old times—and waited for what was going to be said to her.

"I thought it was to see the squire I was to come," she said, with covert insolence.

"So it is," he said, quietly, "and these ladies and gentlemen as well. We want a little information, Mrs. Westleigh, if you please."

"Mrs. a—a—what?" she gasped, she was taken by surprise. "My name is—"

"Mrs. Westleigh, the one I called you by. You are doubtless in the secret of how your daughter, the lady who has passed herself off as Miss Rivers, managed to establish a claim to the Grange. I see you know all about it. How came the fraud about?"

To say Betty Bird was astonished is a mild form of expressing her state of mind. She stared at the speaker in horror that showed itself in every line of her face and the shaking of every limb, for she trembled like a leaf.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she gasped. "Someone has been telling falsehoods."

"I think not," the clear voice of Mr. Deacon said, with pitiless accuracy. "You are Mrs. Westleigh, formerly an actress in the same company with the brother of Sir Darcie Rivers."

"And what if I am? There is no shame in having been on the stage that I know of."

"Certainly not; the stage is an honourable profession in itself, it is the members of it that bring it into disrepute. But there is shame in a woman stealing a husband's affections from his wife, and then passing off her illegitimate offspring as the proper heiress to a fortune and an old name."

The woman was at bay now, and she turned like a hunted animal.

"I didn't," she gasped, "it is all a lie."

"It is all true," the rector said. "Let me talk, Mr. Blennerhasset, please," for the squire would have spoken in his excitement. "You did it with the connivance of the miserable man and his weak wife. It was your child that was foisted on Sir Darcie as the daughter of his brother, which she really was, though with no honest title to the name. We have the whole particulars here. We want to know from you how Miss Westleigh managed to tamper with the letters she found."

"I—I don't know," said the miserable woman; the game was up and she saw in the stern faces around her that prevarication would be useless. "I never knew anything about the lady till she came here. I am not—"

"Not her mother," she would have added, but she could not, the words died on her lips and seemed to choke her, and the rector spoke again.

"The young woman was not aware that Mr. Blennerhasset held proof of what we have

asserted," he said, "or she would doubtless have hesitated before she tried so hazardous a game. The unhappy Mrs. Rivers made a full confession of the fraud that her husband had made her connive at, and Sir Darcie when he died was perfectly aware that the child of his brother had no legal claim on him. Could he have foreseen what was going to happen I have no doubt he would have made the matter more public than he did."

"I had nothing to do with it," gasped Betty Bird, "I didn't know where she was till I heard it from Mr. Leicester here."

"But you have traded on it since, you have held it over the head of the wretched man who has married your daughter, and you have accepted benefits from her to keep the secret. The letters by which she made her claim good were written by her unhappy mother to Sir Darcie confessing the fraud. She is a clever woman, Mrs. Westleigh, but she has turned her talents to bad account. She stands in danger of being arrested for conspiracy and fraud by reason of her tampering with those letters."

"I can testify to how she did it," Belton Leicester said, as the woman would have turned on them again with a volley of protestations, "at least, to her purchasing the necessary materials for the fraud. We only wanted your testimony, Mrs. Westleigh, that she is your daughter to complete the chain of evidence."

"And what if I deny it?"

"Then you will stand the chance of being arrested also."

Betty Bird was not proof against the threat of police interference. It may be that there were other portions of her career that would not bear the investigating eye of the law; at any rate, before she left the presence of her accusers, a free woman as far as they were concerned, she had signed a full confession of her part in the conspiracy to foist the child on the baronet as his brother's daughter and the next heiress failing Nellie to the estates of Milverstone.

(To be Continued.)



[OLD RECOLLECTIONS.]

ROY NORMAN; OR, PAVED WITH GOLD. (A COMPLETE STORY).

CHAPTER I.

ROY NORMAN sat in his plainly-furnished apartment, which served the double purpose of sitting and bedroom. His attitude and the expression of his finely-cut features—features that bore strongly the impress of the character within—were betokening anxiety and deliberation that ill befitted early manhood scarcely past the bright and joyous period of youth. His eyes were bent on some papers on the table before him, which he had just taken from a lettercase, and which, in its turn, had been extracted from the recess of a writing-desk.

One was a letter in a clear, feminine hand, and in the same envelope which had contained it was a miniature of a fair, womanly face, with clear, earnest eyes, and light brown hair, banded under a simple but becoming cap; and there was another enclosure of a different character—a flimsy—a piece of paper that yet bore the value of ten golden sovereigns. In plain English, it was a Bank of England note.

And Roy gazed on these precious possessions with a troubled air that spoke of some doubt and perplexity belonging to that contemplation such as could hardly be explained by their apparently pleasing character.

He was tall and well built, was that young Cumbrian, and there was little in his whole bearing or physiognomy that indicated sentimental weakness. There was evidently some deeper and hidden meaning in his earnest, saddened gaze than lay on the surface.

His whole senses seemed to be engrossed by the reverie occasioned by, or to say the least

founded on the documents that were in themselves so simple.

He was roused from his meditation by the sound of a well-known footstep on the stairs, and the rough, loud tap at the door that was but too familiar to him.

And equally well known was the accent of the applicant for admission. Yet there was no alternative. She must be admitted—must that irate and terrible landlady.

She could only be propitiated by his frank and open statement. Perhaps she might be induced to wait, to trust him in the one case, but most assuredly not by any avoidance or contempt of her claims.

"Come in," was his speedy response.

And in another moment a tall, bony woman, with keen, sharp eyes, false hair, and strong, masculine features, walked into the room.

"Well, Mr. Norman, have you got my rent ready?" she asked, in a harsh tone.

"I am sorry to say no, Mrs. Scales, but—"

"But me no buts, Mr. Norman. You know I agreed with you when you took the room for a weekly payment of six shillings and sixpence per week, and now there is three weeks owing, and, what is more, some oddments besides, Mr. Norman, and I declare to you that I neither can nor will stand it. I am a widow woman and I have my bread to win, and so it's no good talking, Mr. Norman."

The young man listened with calm patience to the rasping tones. He knew that to a certain extent she had the right on her side. He did owe the money, and he did enter into the agreement of which she spoke. Yet he also was in a measure guiltless of any wilful wrong.

"Mrs. Scales, you are perfectly justified in your demand. I only ask for a little longer delay. I have money owing to me at the end of my quarter, so that you are quite safe in the future. It is only a month, and then all will be paid."

"Oh, yes, that is all very fine, but it won't pay my landlord, and, what's more, I don't trust young fellows like you. How do I know that

you have not plenty of other debts to clear off, even if you do get the money? No, no, it won't do."

"What are your terms then, Mrs. Scales?" asks Roy. "How long will you give me before you carry out your threats?"

"How long? Why, perhaps twenty-four hours," she said, angrily.

"I have enough in my trunk to pay a month's rent at the very least," returned Roy. "Yes, and any extras besides. Give me another week, Mrs. Scales. I daresay I may be able to muster the money by then."

He was young and good-looking. Mrs. Scales was of an age and type to be somewhat susceptible to the influence of such attributes. And thus a slight but visible softening took place in her expression and manner.

"Well, well, you've got the look of an honest man, as I thought when I took you, and, what's more, you don't live extravagantly and above your means, so perhaps I'll give you this last chance. But not a day longer, I'll tell you—no, not an hour. You needn't think to get over me again—no, not under any pretext. I'll turn you out and keep all you've got till I'm paid my own, that's certain, if I saw you starving in the street."

Mrs. Scales gave a resolute tap on the table as she spoke and a stern nod of her head that spoke more than words.

No one could doubt her resolution nor the strength of will that would carry it out. No weak pity or softening sympathy was likely to move her from her purpose, and so Roy instinctively knew. So he could but accept the grace and act on it as he best could.

Yet when Mrs. Scales retired he sank down again in his former attitude of despondency, which the possession of the magic "flimsy" did not tend to cheer.

Roy Norman was a Cumbrian and an orphan. He had left his ancestral home soon after his father's death to seek his fortune in the metropolis, with little interest or experience in mercantile pursuits.

He had but his strong will, his unshaken integrity, and his manly industry and energy to trust to in his need. And those qualities had procured him his present situation of fifty pounds a year.

It was little enough for lodging, food, and clothing, but Roy was promised an increase, and he had confidence in his own powers to rise in the world, and he accepted it *faute de mieux*. But the trifle he brought with him was quickly exhausted after all his necessary expenses in his outset were defrayed. All but the magic note that was in his keeping, and to that note a special history was attached.

It had been given to him by his mother on their parting, with a sacred behest.

"Roy, my own boy, my dear son," she had said, earnestly, "you are going out in the wide world, I cannot tell to what temptations and risks. I have little to give you, my boy, save my blessing and my prayers. Your brother inherits the land that has been tilled for generations by your forefathers, and your young sister will remain with him, at any rate till his marriage. But still I would fain see her and you safe from trouble and distress before I leave this world, and I know well I shall not be here long. Now listen, Roy. This bank-note is my own, saved out of my personal allowance, and I wish you to take it on these conditions—that you will keep it untouched save in any extremity that may befall you—which, may God forbid. If you need it for illness, or starvation and want, then use it for yourself or for Ethel, but not except for such emergencies. It will perhaps save you or her at the last moment of trial. And I should like to feel that you can never be in great extremity."

"You shall be obeyed, mother," said the youth, earnestly. "I promise you faithfully, and I would die rather than break my word."

"I believe you, Roy, I believe you, and my blessing be on you, my boy. It is a sore trial to part with you, when you were born to such different prospects had your dear father been spared. But you will rise, Roy—yes, rise—if you keep fast by the lessons you have been taught, and I will pray for you till my last hour."

Such had been Mrs. Norman's farewell behest, and steadily and religiously had Roy kept his word up to this hour. Nor did he dream of appropriating to his urgent need that tempting note, which would have relieved him from his present distress and danger. It was neither starvation nor illness that had as yet overtaken him.

A week's respite was his before he could be turned from his lodgings, and ere that time was up there might be some means of escaping from this dire extremity.

He dared not ask his employers for an advance of his salary. He was in a position that involved some trust, and it would give them a poor opinion of him if he could not wait till the end of the quarter for his money. So he went on in his duty day after day during that anxious week without any visible means of meeting the demand of his landlady unless he forfeited all his belongings, and, in a measure, deprived himself of the means of preserving a respectable appearance in his situation.

He had parted with the little jewellery that belonged to him while waiting for his present berth, and thus no possible alternative remained to the most fertile imagination.

Time wore on. The days were all too short and yet too long for the anxious Roy. Each hour brought him nearer to extremity, and yet the time of suspense was irksome to his feverish impatience.

Surely something would turn up. But no friendly fairy, no genii of the ring or the lamp, no mysterious friend and benefactor appeared on the scene.

What was to be done? Who would take him in without baggage or money? How dare he even give a reference to his employers under such circumstances? They would be astonished and disgusted and mistrustful at such a tale.

No, he must brave his fate, even if he could find no shelter for his head—save it might be the humblest of the humble. It would hardly

come under the head of starvation, since he had dinner at the establishment, and that one full meal would have to supply his need.

Thus went on five days of that weary week and still no relief. And poor Roy went about with a heavy heart and slow, faltering step, his spirit sinking within him, and still his integrity holding fast and his courage still equal to the emergency of his situation.

Yet there was a bent, broken look in that tall, slight form as he walked along the streets on that last evening when his home would be open to him.

Mrs. Scales had grown more surly and abrupt during the interval. Every time she saw her lodger her eyes if not her lips had greedily demanded her money.

The small handmaiden who was the landlady's only help, did not wittingly perhaps neglect the good-looking, kindly young man, but it was remarkable how sharply she was called away by her mistress ere she had time to attend to Roy's modest wants, and how scant and humble were the necessities supplied to him.

And now that this last day had arrived and Roy came home to tea at his usual hour, and no sound or word of payment was heard, Mrs. Scales was more indignantly virtuous than ever. She was an honest woman and paid her way, and she hated and despised folks that lived on other persons' credit and money, and, what was more, she would see to it, that was certain.

Roy quietly heard all this, audibly ejaculated to some real or imaginary listener, and then with a half-contemptuous sigh he walked away from the house, that was only to give him shelter for one night more.

He took his way along the crowded streets to the park, where on that summer evening he could enjoy a fresher air than in the close neighbourhood of the houses packed crowdedly together.

He sat down on one of the seats in languid dejection, all unlike the cheerful gaiety of those who were promenading or strolling around. So abstracted was he that he did not even notice how the throng thinned as the hour grew late.

It mattered not to him. No one waited for him at his lodgings—no longer his home—no one would make him comfortable on his return. Better remain there till it was time to seek for the last time his bed—whether or, not to sleep.

Thus the day departed, and the sunlight gave place to the silvery rays of the moon, and still Roy sat in half-unconscious meditation, mechanically gazing on the objects before him without his mind being bent on the scene.

He was at last roused to a sense of the lateness of the hour by the loud tongue of Big Ben booming over the neighbourhood the time of night, and he rose slowly and reluctantly to depart.

As he stood for a moment with a strange consciousness that this was the crisis of his fate his downcast eyes fell upon a bright, glittering object in the turf.

He stooped down to examine it, and to his mingled surprise and vague sense of relief he found, half hidden in the soft green, two golden sovereigns, which had evidently been but recently dropped, to judge from the brightness of the coins when wiped from the evening dew that had damped them.

Roy sank down again on the bank from which he had risen. His manhood fairly gave way at the sudden relief thus singularly sent to him. There was no dishonour in availing himself of the boon. It would be worse than Quixotic to leave them for some other lucky finder of the treasure trove.

It would be equally as foolish to advertise gold, without one mark to identify the owner, since it was nearly certain to fall into the hands of some adventitious claimant.

Then his conscience was clear in accepting the bounty to which, however trifling it might seem in amount, he might owe the salvation and prosperity of his whole life.

There are many who would smile at the emotions which appeared so disproportioned to the occasion, but it must be remembered that Roy

Norman was friendless, utterly dependent on the employers whom a slighter irregularity than shabby clothes and banishment from humble lodgings might utterly disgust and ruin his character and future prospects.

"Saved," he murmured, "saved! Heaven be thanked."

And he did thank Heaven on his knees when he arrived at his rooms ere he summoned the landlady to his presence.

"Mrs. Scales," he said, "I see your account is on the mantelpiece. Here is your money, and now it rests with yourself whether I shall remain here and pay you when my salary comes in within a month from this date, or whether I shall take other rooms on those terms. I am willing to remain; I do not think you have acted unreasonably under the circumstances, but at the same time I will not expose myself to such insults again. I am an honest man and expect to be treated like one if I stay with you."

"Well, sir, I'm willing to believe it, and I do say you've acted altogether like a gentleman," returned Mrs. Scales, with some embarrassment. "But you see, sir, we're so often cheated, and it did certainly seem very strange that a gentleman like you shouldn't have just a pound or so about him. But now that you've paid me I don't mind letting it go on a bit. It's different when there's a time fixed and one knows, and so I'll wait, and if you pay me then I shall be quite satisfied—it's honourable and aboveboard."

And Mrs. Scales duly receipted the bill, and actually added a slice of ham from her own table to the frugal bread and cheese that formed her young lodger's supper.

Roy Norman's peril was over, so far as personal safety was concerned.

But at his age mercenary considerations and possible hardships are not secondary to more softened and heart-touching risks which must beset the lonely career of a stranger in a large city all foreign to his early habits and associations.

Yes, Roy Norman had his dream, Love's young dream, that was in his case a romance equal to his singular adventure of the park.

It was some months after the tide had wafted him over the shoal on which he was so nearly shipwrecked, and Roy resolved to spend a brief holiday at Croydon and ramble at pleasure over the lovely neighbourhood during the few hours that were at his disposal.

He walked over to Beddington Park, and after a frugal meal of bread and cheese and ale at the little inn he sat down to enjoy a cigar and a book ere he turned his steps to the railway station.

As he sat there, lost in vague and wandering thoughts, he was suddenly aroused by the treble scream of a woman's voice evidently in some danger or distress.

Again and again the shriek was renewed, and each time it was nearer and nearer, till at last Roy started up to go in search of the female in distress whoever she might be.

In a moment more she came in sight. It was a young and slight figure of a girl flying timidly away from a stag in full pursuit, who had taken some violent pique against her, and was bent on carrying it out to the utmost of his power, and, thanks to a pair of strong antlers, the revenge would not be very difficult.

It was a service of danger to interpose between the pursuer and the pursued, for the stag had evidently taken no light offence, and he was swift and strong in his limbs, while the girl, however agile and light, was well nigh exhausted and breathless in her flight.

But Roy did not hesitate. He sprang forward, with no other defence than the slender cane he carried, and threw himself between the girl and her assailant.

"Fly," he said, "fly, and I will cover your retreat."

But the girl hesitated, and stood behind her rescuer with persistent courage. She would not fly to leave him exposed to the brunt of the attack.

No. She stood, slightly sheltered perhaps by Roy's more stalwart frame; but still in an attitude that at once diverted the creature's rage and enabled her to assist with her parasol in the defence.

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CHAPTER II.

The united efforts did indeed succeed after a few minutes in bringing the creature to a stand, and finally, after some vigorous assaults by the strong arm of Roy Norman, it at last hesitated, turned, gave a fierce yet timid glance at its enemies, and then scampered off as swiftly as it had come.

Roy had now leisure to survey his charge. The girl was alight and small as a fairy, with golden hair and complexion that was like a rose leaf under driven snow, but which was now flushed to a soft, vivid bloom by the exercise and the alarm.

She was simply attired in the fashion of the time in a white dress and hat trimmed with blue silk, which was certainly about as becoming a costume as the most coquettish could have chosen.

But the pretty blonde, as the girl in question was decidedly to be called, had no instinct save of pure and elegant taste to guide her choice. Not one particle of vanity mingled with her youthful joyousness of nature and love of the beautiful.

Roy Norman thought as he gazed at her that he had never seen anything so angelic as the fair young creature he had saved, and when she thanked him in a voice that certainly "discouraged music" he was more than ever convinced of the truth of the belief.

"How can I be grateful enough?" she said. "That terrible creature seemed to take offence because I was feeding one of the young ones, and he rushed at me before I had time to run away. I do think he would have killed me if you had not been so courageous and kind."

"I think you were the brave one," said Roy, smiling. "It was very courageous to stand as you did. Almost everyone else would have run away."

"Of my sex, I suppose you mean?" said the girl, with an arch smile that added to her beauty. "However, I hope even women would not desert their champion in such a cowardly style."

"Are you alone? Might I have the privilege of escorting you home?" asked Roy, shyly.

"Thank you. I am alone, for the friend I am staying with at Croydon is an invalid, but if you will go with me to the end of the park I shall be much obliged. Then I shall be perfectly safe and have no fear at all."

There was an enchanting mixture of simplicity and modesty in her manner that more than ever bewitched poor Roy.

He certainly would not have thought it too far if there had been miles between him and the temporary home of the fair young girl, but he was very reticent and respected too chivalrously the delicate reserve of the female sex to urge his escort upon her.

The brief space between them and the gates of the park was all too soon traversed, but each moment added to Roy's sudden but hopeless admiration of his new acquaintance. She was so sweet, so frank, and yet so bewitching that he felt to have known her for weeks rather than minutes, while yet she preserved so completely a tone of high-bred, feminine reserve.

"I dare scarcely hope we shall meet again, but it will always be a pleasant memory that I have been of any use to you," Roy said, earnestly, as he held for a moment her extended hand.

"And I shall always be grateful to you," returned the girl, softly. "Thank you a thousand times for your protection."

And thus they parted, with an impression on one side, at least, that would not be easily shaken off.

Roy's northern nature was little susceptible of love fancies such as are entertained by most young men of his age and position. But, as often happens in such cases, when any such feeling seized on him it was deeper and more absorbing than would have been the case where they had been frittered away by repetition.

Thus Roy's lingering look at his companion's features engraved them on his heart, and the tones of her sweet voice lingered musically in his ears as he replaced his hat and walked slowly towards the station, and returned to London to resume his monotonous duties and to dream at his leisure of that fascinating blonde.

THREE years had passed away, and the poor, struggling tyro in mercantile life had achieved a very different position from being the lodger of Mrs. Scales, threatened with an ejection from his room and the seizure of his worldly belongings.

Roy had indeed stepped with remarkable and giant strides up the ladder of fortune, by what was in a measure an accident, but still mainly due to his own abilities and industry.

He was now a partner in a large and flourishing house of business. The principal was an elderly man and anxious to transfer his fatigues and anxieties to younger and more energetic shoulders.

One son-in-law, whose energies were not quite so unflinching or talents so undoubted as the young Cumbrian's, and Roy himself were taken as partners into the firm. And as the concern was a large and flourishing one, and the young man's abilities and industry fully equal to its extension, the income that he now commanded was about twenty times as much as the modest salary with which he had started in life.

"You will henceforward consider yourself free of our house, Norman," said Mr. Longstaff, when the arrangement had been completed. "My wife has reception evenings twice a week, and she and I also will always be glad to see you, as well as on other occasions; but these are more sociable affairs than actual parties."

Now Mr. and Mrs. Longstaff had more than one marriageable daughter, and it might be that they had no objection to the chance that the second partner as well as the third in the firm should become a son-in-law.

But Roy, while grateful for the hospitable invitation, had not the slightest idea of availing himself of the opportunity to woo and win Edith Longstaff.

The memory of the fair heroine of the Beddington adventure still lingered in his heart, and all the young and smiling galaxy he met from time to time at the senior partner's seemed "flat and stale" in comparison with that bright vision.

"I am a fool—a perfect fool!" he muttered to himself. "Here's a girl I have only seen a brief half-hour, whose name I do not know and whom I shall probably never meet again, and yet I am about to remain single for her sake if I go on in this frantic way. Still I can't and I will not marry whom I do not love, and I never saw any woman who could compare to her, or who touched my heart as she did in those few minutes. Well, I will wait."

And with this determination he went home to dress for one of these receptions, at which, almost as a business duty, he was bound to attend.

But, either from the unusually prolonged reverie or from a secret reluctance to join the circle of uninteresting persons who frequently formed the party, he was decidedly late, and in fact the last to enter the saloon of the wealthy merchant.

He went up as in duty bound to pay his respects to his hostess, but just as he turned from doing so the sound of a piano in the adjoining room met his ears. The symphony was played to a song he knew and liked beyond almost any English ballad familiar to him. And in another moment the vocalist began to sing.

But what a voice!—a pure soprano—rich and powerful and with a compass that its mistress could use at pleasure, and that gave a charm to each note she uttered.

There was exquisite pathos in the expression too, and when it died softly away at the close there was silence for a moment, as if hanging on the floating melody.

Then there was a general chorus of applause. But Roy did not join in it. To him it would have seemed to profane the charming effect of the words and music to follow it with an ovation of applause.

But as the throng gradually dispersed he caught a glimpse of the vocalist, and that glimpse drew him like a magnet to the spot.

There could be no mistake, that face and form were too deeply imprinted on his mind for him to doubt that the young lady whose voice had thus entranced him was identical with the fairy of Beddington Park.

As he gained that first view of her figure she was beset by eager petitions for "more," so in a few moments her glorious voice was again sounding on the air.

And now Roy had an opportunity of observing more closely the young creature who had so strangely interested him.

She was certainly little changed in beauty, perhaps even more lovely than when he had first seen her.

But still there was some difference in her. That brilliant bloom was softer and more delicate—her eyes had a more pensive expression than their former sparkling archness—and the very pathos of her voice both in singing and in speaking, when answering the compliments and questions showered upon her, was all unlike its former joyous ring.

Altogether she gave him the impression of one who had sustained some abiding and saddening sorrow, which had clouded her young life. He waited for a few minutes till some other of the guests took her place at the piano and then he ventured to approach her as she sought a retired seat in a recess near the instrument.

"May I claim acquaintance?" he said, softly, under cover of a loud bravura. "Perhaps you have forgotten me, but I never have lost remembrance of you since we met."

She gazed at him for a brief moment in doubt. Perhaps it was no great wonder. He was certainly much more altered than herself. The careworn, not too well-dressed young fellow who had saved her from the antlers of the furious stag had matured into a well-bred and well-attired and fine-looking man of the world, whose natural gifts had now full play in the circumstances in which he was placed.

Besides, his very air and mien were different from the depressed and anxious aspirant for fortune who had the terror of Mrs. Scales and her vengeance before his eyes.

But his voice and the expression of his eyes soon recalled to her the characteristics of her preserver, whose service had been indelible on her gratitude, and she gave a half-ashamed, half-pleased smile of recognition.

"Oh, dear, how could I be so stupid!" she said, extending her hand with an eager warmth of cordiality that atoned for the innocent offence. "But I never could have expected to meet you here. And—and—even now I—"

"Do not know my name. Is that what you would say?" he interrupted. "And as I do not like to think that we need a formal introduction I will tell you at once I am Roy Norman, now lucky enough to be the partner of our host. Now might I be impertinent enough to ask the name by which I may address you?" he added, with a smile that was enough to win any female heart.

"Well then I may give mine as Helen Moore," she returned. "But I am not living at home now or I should have been so glad for my parents to have thanked you as they have so often wished for your service to me, and now—it is impossible," she added, with a half-sigh.

At the moment Miss Moore was called away to take part in a glee that was about to be begun, but before it was over Roy's services were in equal requisition at a whist table, so that the two old but new friends did not meet again that evening.

But when the party had dispersed Roy took the opportunity to ask the son-in-law of his host who the young lady was that sang so well.

"I never heard a finer voice or better expression," he added, as if to apologise for the inquiry.

"Oh, that is the daughter of a physician who came to terrible grief, poor man. He was actually sold up, and the daughter, poor Helen, is a governess now to my younger sister, and as you say she was brought here to-night as a wonderful vocalist. It is astonishing what a voice she has."

"How came all this ruin then on her father?" asked Roy. "It is not often that a man in that position is so completely done for without some terrible imprudence of his own."

"Oh, it was not exactly that in Moore's case," observed Mr. Harris. "The fact was that Dr. Moore had invested largely in a bank without proper security for the money entrusted to it. The money was made ducks and drakes of—the bank went to grief; and as there was an unlimited liability, all Dr. Moore had, including furniture and plate and all his belongings, went in the crash. All he has left is about a hundred a year settled on his wife. Of course it is a bare subsistence for them, and, as I said before, Helen, naturally enough, went out as a teacher, and only a week or two ago she came to my mother as a finishing governess to my youngest sister. She's a nice girl, I daresay—indeed I am sure of it. Pity her father was such an old idiot."

Roy listened with eager interest.

"How long has this been then?" he asked.

"Well, only within the last year or two, I fancy," replied Mr. Harris, "but, oddly enough, his fortunes had been all going wrong before the final crash. He often declared his troubles began with a casual loss he had some three years since which terribly annoyed him, I remember. It certainly was provoking, though comparatively a trifle."

"What was that then?" asked Roy.

Every small detail relating to Helen was interesting to him.

"Well, it is a common thing enough perhaps, only rather peculiar in the manner of it," said Mr. Harris. "Dr. Moore had been receiving the rent of a house he held in Pimlico, and as it happened it was paid in sovereigns—twenty, as I understand. Well, the worthy man, who was more learned than wise and never very celebrated for his worldly and practical wisdom, put the sum, wrapped up in thin paper, in his waistcoat pocket. The weight soon broke the paper, and then either made or enlarged a hole in his pocket. The whole sum vanished, though, as it would seem, gradually, or else he would have realised the lessening of the weight; and, besides, the hole was not a really large one, just what sovereigns might pass through one by one as they drifted to the place. It was a great annoyance to the old gentleman and his wife, who was somewhat hard on his imprudence. And the old fellow always dates his downfall from that first trouble."

Roy listened with the most intense interest to the tale.

"Have you any idea of the time of year, and of the hour of night?" he asked.

"It was in the late autumn, and in the evening. I know so much as that, but I daresay Helen would know all particulars. Why do you ask, Roy?"

Why did he ask?

Because all the past flashed upon him, and he wondered whether this could have had any connection with the discovery that had been the foundation of his fortunes.

Could it be that his rise had dated with another's fall? Could it be that one man's safety had been coeval with another's ruin?

The coincidence was fantastic and foolish, but it was a true one if his conjectures were correct. And Roy's plans and purposes were founded ere he slept that night.

Still there was more difficulty than he had at first anticipated. The life of a governess is scarcely a free one, and Helen Moore's was no exception to the rule.

The girl was not often to be seen. One or two of the reception nights she was pronounced to have a bad headache or to be quite engaged with her charge.

Roy's curiosity was awakened. He took measures accordingly, and stayed away one or two nights, and gave every impression that he should be unable to attend a third.

But it was a remarkable clearing away of the difficulties that had threatened to engage him, and later on in the evening he entered quietly and unnoticed the familiar saloons.

His quick eye glanced eagerly round. He dis-

covered at a distance, half hidden behind a large jardinière, the slight figure of her he loved, and he passed on to it, with the firm resolution of a man who knows his purpose.

"Helen," he said, in a low tone, as he took a seat by her, "are you surprised to see me?"

"Yes; they said it was very likely you would not come," she said, trying to repress the start of pleasure that had greeted his approach.

"I came to see you. Can you not imagine it?" he returned, softly.

"No," she answered, gently. "Have you anything to ask? The copy of that song you liked so much perhaps."

"Yes, I have something to ask—something that concerns my whole future life. Will you—can you love me, Helen?"

She started convulsively. A deep flush suffused her sweet face and her eyes fell, but no word escaped her.

"Helen, you do not speak. Tell me the truth. I can bear it like a man if you tell me there is no hope—but not suspense."

Her eyes were lifted shyly, but they were more speaking than words. Roy knew she was no coquette. He felt sure that she would not deceive him, but still he longed for a word to verify the truth.

"May I speak to your father, Helen?"

The idea seemed to give her courage to answer. She started from her sweet dream and exclaimed, hurriedly:

"Oh, how wrong I am to you, to—to them. It is impossible. They can't do without me, and I cannot and will not abandon them," she said, sadly. "Forgive me—but it is my first duty, and even for the greatest happiness I can't violate it."

There was a bewitching and shy confession in the words that had too much reality in their deep feeling to allow of any false maidenly coquetry.

He felt that she was even more than he had believed—the very ideal of a woman's perfection, such as he had dreamed of, and such as his own dear mother had embodied. He could not and would not give her up.

"Helen, listen to me for a moment. If it could be made consistent with your parents' happiness—if they could be once more in their former condition—would you consent to trust yourself to me? Would you feel safe and happy?"

"Safe? Oh, yes—oh, yes," she murmured; "but it is impossible—please do not dream of it. It only will add to the grief."

Roy said nothing, but there was a calm and settled satisfaction in his face that still had nothing of triumph in it. It was not pride that he had won the heart he coveted, it was all too calm and too concentrated for that passing exultation.

"You will give me their address at least, Helen," he resumed. "If you can trust me at all—if you think me worthy to be your husband—you will believe that I would not violate your wishes, nor give one hour of needless annoyance or vexation to those you love so truly. Will you believe me?"

"Oh, yes—oh, yes. I must trust you, or I should never believe in anyone again," she said, trustfully, and she drew out a card from her dress and wrote a few pencilled words on it.

"It may be a few days—even longer—before I am in a position to see them," he said, "but be sure of my truth and constancy, Helen. Be assured you will not be deceived."

Did she doubt him? No, she would as soon have doubted the purity of the moon—the brilliancy of the sun. And with sweet, maidenly patience and reliance she rested on his assurance and waited for all that he promised and planned.

He had prophesied truly. Weeks went on and she heard no more. More than once they had met, and a brief interchange of greetings sent a thrill from heart to heart. She doubted not, yet still at times she wished and prayed that the suspense would end.

It was a beautiful day in September, just waning into evening, when Dr. Moore and his

wife were sitting in the obscurity of the light in the small parlour of a rustic cottage some three miles or so from the metropolis, such light as still betrayed the plain and somewhat scanty furniture.

They had not spoken for some time, but they sat with eyes turned on the window on which for the time they depended for their sole light.

Indeed they were now so far reduced in their once affluent circumstances that every small saving was of account to their scanty means. The doctor gave a deep sigh as he at last broke silence.

"Ah! Florence, my dear, do you remember what I have but now been thinking? It is the anniversary of the day our troubles began. It was this very night three years ago when I was fool enough to lose that money, and we have never prospered since. We have gone lower and lower in the social scale, and my poor child, our poor Helen, is a victim as well as you, my poor, patient wife."

"My dear, dear husband, do not talk so—one would think you had gambled with that money instead of losing it accidentally."

"No, Florence, I know that, but still it was a folly that was almost a crime. Only imagine when I had that amount of money that I should not take more care! And besides I remember, what was even more absurd and weak, that I saw a sovereign on the ground and picked it up with a half-smile at my superfluous good fortune. I can understand it all now. It was one of my own that had fallen through my pocket!"

Mrs. Moore was about to condemn as absurd the superstition that so strangely connected the sudden loss of the money with the more serious misfortunes that followed when the door bell rang, and a card was soon brought in by the small maid who was their sole domestic help.

"On special business," was pencilled on the pasteboard, and with some nervous hesitation the visitor was admitted.

"Dr. Moore," said the stranger, "my card will have conveyed to you my name, but I must still further introduce myself as the junior partner of Mr. Longstaff, with whom your daughter is living as governess. And, what is more, I am here with her permission to ask you for her hand, on certain conditions which I will explain to you presently."

Perhaps Mrs. Moore had an inkling of the truth from casual mention in Helen's letters, but she said nothing, and her husband replied:

"You mean then that Helen is willing to accept you, Mr. Norman. Of course your position as Mr. Longstaff's partner is a good one, and I can easily ascertain your character if I choose. But—but that is not all, and—and—"

Dr. Moore gave a deep sigh, and once more relapsed into his former gloom.

"No, doctor, that is not all. Your daughter will not consent to deprive you of any comfort that she can afford you, for the sake of what I trust will be for her happiness. Still I do not despair of uniting your improved happiness with hers. I have a debt to repay that I am thankful and proud to return."

"You! A debt?" exclaimed Dr. Moore. "Why, my good sir, I never saw you before in my life."

"No, I believe not, doctor," said Roy, quietly, "yet you are the cause of my good fortune in life, and I trust to repay it, both to you and the being I love most in the world. Listen to me and I will soon explain the mystery." And in a few graphic words he related his tale.

"Only imagine," he concluded, "what I felt when I discovered that the father of her who had won my heart was the owner of the sum that saved me from such sorrow. But the delay in coming to confess the obligation and complete my own happiness was occasioned by my efforts to arrange some more substantial proof of my gratitude. This day three years my good fortune began, and this day with your permission I hope to restore to you some of yours."

Doctor Moore flushed.

"Mr. Norman, I am still too proud to live on alms," he said, hurriedly.

"Nor did I ever dream of insulting the parents of my future wife so far," returned Roy, quietly.

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"But at least you will allow me to place you in a position to obtain by your own talents an adequate income. I have, after much inquiry, discovered an excellent partnership in the neighbourhood of London, where you will be less harassed than by a city practice, and besides you would have a partner to take the more arduous part of the work. It only remains for you to give it your approval for the negotiations to be concluded," he went on, smiling at the open-mouthed bewilderment of his listeners. In truth the couple were speechless with astonishment and joy.

Their small pittance, eked out even as it was by their daughter's contributions, was all inadequate to the wants of increasing age and infirmity of health. And now to have the prospect of their daughter's marriage with a rising and prosperous man, whose noble qualities were so fully and unmistakably displayed, and also the means of at once earning a sufficient income with ease and safety to Dr. Moore's enfeebled health, was indeed a joy and relief that could hardly be appreciated by their stunned faculties.

"Mr. Norman, what can I say? How can I accept such benefits from a comparative stranger on whom I can have no claim?" said the doctor, falteringly.

"Pardon me, doctor. It is I surely who am the debtor. First for the saving me from ruin, and leading to the prosperity I enjoy, and now for the inestimable blessing of your daughter's hand. Do you value her so little that you think my money an adequate return for such a proud boon?" he added, with lover-like enthusiasm.

The parents listened with delight to the praises of their fair child, and after some calmer and more deliberate conversation they became more able to reflect and reason and to appreciate the real and practical issue of the romance that was ending so opportunely for their future lives.

"Nay, do not give me too much credit," said Roy, laughingly. "Perhaps, had I not seen and fallen in love with Helen I might not have estimated so highly my obligation to her parents."

"Yes, and that is another boon we owe you," said Dr. Moore, "our darling's life. Oh, Mr. Norman, what can we do to repay your benefits?"

"Leave Helen to do that," returned Roy. "And now I must go. I long to claim my reward, if one is due to me, and without more delay I can assure you than is absolutely needful."

But there was more delay than even Roy's practical sense anticipated.

The investigation of the details of the partnership and conclusion of the negotiation was a tedious process to lovers' impatience. And then came the preparations for the bridal.

"Helen shall be married from her father's house," said Roy, with his usual delicacy and appreciation of others' feelings, "and that house must be worthy of herself and of them. We must wait till they are settled in the new habitation."

But that house was yet to be found and prepared, as well as the residence of the new pair, and still Roy Norman preserved a mysterious and unaccountable silence on both points that perplexed Mrs. Moore's woman's impatience.

It was now Christmastide, and everyone was excited with the preparations for the joyous festival.

Mr. Longstaff's household was nevertheless somewhat sobered by the approaching departure of their governess, and the certainty that Roy Norman was irrevocably lost to them as an eligible parti.

Helen was going, the leavetaking was over, and she was only waiting the arrival of the vehicle that was to convey her to the station which belonged to the line near which her parents' home was situated.

But to her surprise and that of the friends she was quitting, instead of a hired cab, Miss Moore's conveyance was a modest but well-appointed brougham, which was announced by:

"Dr. Moore's carriage, for his daughter."

Helen was bewildered, but there could be no mistake in the clear and positive statement, and her luggage was placed on the carriage and she stepped in with a vague uneasiness that some good genius had dictated her movements and worked the happy wonders that were like the dream of a fairy tale.

Moreover the carriage did not drive to a station but to a pretty villa residence near Clapham Common, on the gate of which the name of Dr. Moore was engraved.

Helen saw it all now. She did not need the presence of her parents waiting to welcome her with happy tears of grateful emotion. She did not need Roy's expressive face beaming with triumphant delight to explain the mystery. This was her parents' future home, from which she was to be taken to her permanent residence by one she loved and trusted.

And if looks could convey the soothing affection and gratitude of her heart Helen's eyes richly thanked the author of all this happiness.

A month later and a bridal cortège went from that pretty villa, and a fair, bright bride stood at the altar and spoke vows that would be amply redeemed.

But when at the breakfast that followed the ceremony the health of the bride and bridegroom was drunk Roy declared in his response that not only had he found in London a lovely and beloved bride but that its parks if not its streets were "Paved with Gold."

NOBLE AT LAST;

OR,

THE HEADSMAN OF ROUEN.

(AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.)

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUNGEON'S INMATE.

GAULTIER seated himself at his solitary evening meal, elegantly served and carefully prepared, as was the custom in his rich and quiet household, without appetite, but forcing an appearance of one and maintaining his sombre equanimity.

Raoul stood behind his chair serving him with the silent, respectful assiduity that was his wont.

Dame Judith after her usual custom occupied a large chair at the side of the saloon opposite her master, but not with the cheerful garrulity which ordinarily marked her observance of his repast. She was knitting silently and only now and then ventured to glance up stealthily and anxiously at Gaultier.

The latter, knowing her shrewdness and lifelong study of his moods and thoughts, perhaps suspected that she had guessed his secret; but he went on with viand and wine in his accustomed stately and preoccupied way, carefully avoiding any fresh self-betrayal.

He finished his repast, and retreating to his study began to pace the floor back and forth with long strides.

Night closed in and lights were brought, but he gave little heed and remained buried in the abyss of his gloomy thoughts.

Such was the self-control, even self-tyranny, of this strange being that he finally emerged from that mortal abyss calm and collected, with love effectually set aside and ambition solely, apparently immovably enthroned in heart and soul.

He drew himself up to his full height, stretched forth his hand, eagerly clutching his fingers as though upon some air-drawn, shadowy prize, and drank in with parted lips great draughts of the cool air that swept in through the open casement as though it were the life-giving incense of longed-for power and praise.

"So, to-morrow my long, dark struggle ends!" he murmured, in his low, rich tones.

"But one more neck, but one more cruel stroke, and all is over, all achieved. Ah! my good right arm," and he shook it aloft still more energetically, "thou wilt not shrink or tremble at this crowning stroke. One blow, one more, and then thou wilt exchange the ignominious axe-helve for the knightly hilt, gem-crowned, to be clutched in honour's cause alone."

He ceased speaking, though his lips still moved with words articulated below his breath.

Suddenly, and with a start, they became audible once more.

"A woman's neck—and hers!" he muttered, though without the wild, tumultuous regret, which his philosophical reflection had apparently by this time altogether uprooted and thrust aside. "Ah, would it were otherwise! It is slender and easily severed; yet would it were the brawniest throat that ever man's beard shaded rather than a woman's, white and delicate—and this—ah! this of all the others in the world!"

A tremor of emotion, another pause, and then again:

"Pshaw! 'tis but an effort of my iron will, and, lo! my arm is nerved anew. But I will not think of this; 'twill make me weak, when I must needs be cool and strong. Besides, should not a knowledge of this victim's crime shut out all pity, all remorse? The dauphin says she is a treacherous, blood-stained wretch, who slew her father's friend and guest, and such the court adjudged her. Surely her doom is just. And yet so innocent-appearing, lovely, beautiful—the same and only one that ever caused my heart to leap, my pulse to swell, my soul to thrill with other dreams than of my selfish goal. Away with such thoughts! Let me rather conjure up the past, and out of it my future's airy fabric rear, to steel my purpose to this last ordeal of blood and fire!"

Another pause, during which he again reared aloft his strong right arm, and surveyed it with kindling eyes.

"Ah! well hast thou served me; seldom hast thou failed!" he continued. "I do remember me that once a woman's cry, as she beheld the axe descending on her son, did cause this arm to tremble, and I was forced to strike another blow. Yet, eight right noble heads have fallen at a single stroke—have filled the law's requirements at my hand—to-morrow falls the ninth, and then, thank Heaven! I write nil ultra to my proudest hopes! True, a luckless chance might still conspire to cheat me of my due. Twice hath a timely pardon wrenched my victim from me on the scaffold; thrice hath he escaped me by poison. Ha! I have not thought of that!"

A sudden thought flashed across his brain. "What if she escape me?" he cried. "What if she too hath thought of poison in her guilty dread of ignominious death? Ho, there! Raoul, Raoul, come hither!"

The summons was answered so promptly as to excite suspicion that Raoul, and perhaps Judith likewise, had been eavesdropping upon these soliloquies; but Gaultier was too excited to entertain one at present.

"Haste to the prison stronghold, Raoul, and apprise the governor that I may frequently require to visit the condemned cell during the night. Haste, boy, haste! I follow thee anon!"

Raoul bowed, and disappeared with the fleetness and noiselessness of a shadow.

Gaultier was following him hurriedly, but at a more dignified pace, when he met his old housekeeper at the door of his room.

"You have been listening to my mutterings?" said he, angrily.

"True," she replied, without embarrassment.

"I listened, Gaultier, in the hope of overhearing words differing widely from those so often half-soliloquised in my presence; but I was disappointed."

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing yet; since pride and ambition overshadow still humanity, and even love, within thee."

"How? Speak! What mean you?"

"I'll tarry here till your return," said Judith, coolly seating herself in the study. "Perhaps you will not then have need to be informed."

He looked at her curiously, but bridled further speech, in that his haste was great, and hurried away.

"Can she have fathomed my secret?" he muttered, as he threaded the silent streets.

Once he stopped and listened, thinking he had heard stealthy footsteps following him; but all was silent, and he went on.

He reached the prison, and, his visit being anticipated by the fleet-footed page, found no difficulty in obtaining admission, even at that unseasonable hour.

He stated the nature of his errand to the jailer, who, while assuring him that he need have no apprehensions of the condemned one attempting suicide, willingly conducted him to the cell she occupied. It was situated at the deepest extremity of a long and gloomy stone corridor, and was, of course, the strongest one in the prison.

They moved cautiously, and, on reaching the massive door of the condemned cell, Gaultier, raising on tiptoe, looked through a narrow, grated opening at the top, so high above the jailer's head as to have most likely caused that official to frequently neglect his duty of watching the inmate's movements secretly, and, for the first time since her arrest, he beheld the high-born prisoner.

"We are just in time!" he whispered, starting back with a look of horror and alarm, and at the same time signing the jailer to open speedily.

He was obeyed. The ponderous, but well-oiled bolts were shot back without a sound, and, as the heavy door swung noiselessly back, Gaultier sprang into the dungeon, and chanced to seize the hand of the prisoner as she was in the act of conveying a small phial to her lips.

Gabrielle gave a great cry, in which surprise, terror, and disappointment seemed blended with a strange sense of relief, and then fell upon her knees at Gaultier's feet, and clung to him supplicatingly.

"Have mercy, sir! Oh, do not take it from me!" she entreated. "For the love of Heaven, deprive me not of this last consolation!"

"So, airrah!" said Gaston, apparently disregarding her entreaties, as he turned a rebuking glance upon the disconcerted jailer; "is this the way you look after the condemned—by permitting them to have access to poison, in order to cheat the scaffold of its due?"

A half-intelligible reply, tending partly to self-exculpation, and partly to regret for the failure of the prisoner's attempt, was sternly silenced.

"To your duty at once and leave me here!" exclaimed the executioner, harshly. "The governor shall be informed of this laxity on the part of his deputies."

Then, as the jailer withdrew, considerably crestfallen, he bent upon the beautiful suppliant a sombre glance, which he strove hard to render un pitying and cruel.

Sorrow and suffering had only served to render the beauty of the poor demoiselle more delicate and interesting. In spite of the etiolation of her long confinement, and the mental strain incident to her trial and conviction, the rose of maidenly beauty still haunted her fair cheeks; multitudinous tears had but temporarily dimmed the soft lustre of her deep, sweet eyes; and her long, luxurious hair, falling unconfined about her girlish form, which it enveloped like a lustrous cloud, imparted an unspeakably piteous and lovely effect to her appealing attitude.

"Give, ah, give the phial back to me!" she continued to plead, though unable to distinctly make out the features of the man to whose knees she clung, by reason of his heavily drooping hat.

"Unhappy woman! know you to whom you plead?" exclaimed Gaston, struggling fiercely with his emotions. "Know you at whose hands you beseech the means of self-destruction?"

"No, no!" shrieked Gabrielle, wildly. "I do not know your name, but I feel that you are

noble and powerful. Perhaps you are one of my judges who can set me free. Oh, sir, whosoever you are, have mercy upon an innocent and helpless girl! Save me! save me!"

Gaston's knees began to tremble. She marked the tremor, as a sign of his giving way to pity, and renewed her pleadings.

"I swear to you I am innocent!" she cried. "I never—never slew De Coucy! I hated him—may God forgive me!—I loathed to wed him, but Heaven is witness that I never slew him! Oh, pity me, save me!"

"I have no power to avert your doom, unhappy child!" hoarsely gasped the executioner, in broken accents—fragments torn from a shattered heart. "It is vain to plead to me for help which I am powerless to give."

"Then give me back the phial. Have mercy!"

"It contains poison; I will not—dare not give it to you!"

"But I cannot, oh, I cannot die upon the scaffold!" shrieked Gabrielle. "I cannot face the cruel throng—the loathsome executioner—his bloody axe! I cannot lay my head upon the block! I am a lady, young and noble, and, moreover, most innocent! Oh, sir, grant me this last, only boon—that tiny phial in your hand! My fading sigh shall breathe a blessing on you! Perchance there is one more precious to you than life itself; think of her in my place and turn not so away. It is not much I crave; only to die unseen—alone with God!"

"Ah! this is more than I can endure," muttered Gaston, wildly. "Miserable woman!" he cried aloud; "I cannot but believe in your innocence; your manner and your words enforce it. But I repeat, could you but guess my name, my office, you would plead no more."

"Reveal yourself then!" cried Gabrielle, desperately. "Who art thou?"

"Behold!" cried Gaultier, dashing off his hat, and revealing himself to her, as he had done but a few hours before to her lover.

The effect upon her was even more terrible and appalling. She shrieked, shrank back, and with her long hair thrust over her eyes, shut out the dreadful sight.

When she again found courage to look forth she was once more alone.

(To be Continued.)

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

A FUNERAL DIRECTION.—Mr. George Wombwell, of the Menagerie, who died at Nothallerton in November, 1851, left very singular directions with regard to his funeral; amongst was one that his coffin should be made without nails of a portion of the timber of the Royal George, which he purchased about fourteen years previously, and had kept ever since for that purpose.

CRANBOURN CHASE.—Cranbourn is a market town and parish in the hundred of Cranbourn, Dorsetshire, about twelve miles south west from Salisbury and ninety three from London. Hone, writing in 1827, in the old days of "Cranborne Chase" informs us as follows:—"The deer of Cranbourn Chase usually average about ten thousand in number. In the winter of 1826 they were presumed to amount to from twelve to fifteen thousand. This increase was ascribed to the unusual mildness of recent winters, and the consequent absence of injuries which the animals are subject to from severe weather. In November 1826 a great number of deer from the woods and pastures of the chase, between Gunville and Ashmore, crossed the narrow downs on the western side, and descended into the adjacent parts of the vale of Blackmore in quest of subsistence. . . . It was customary in the last century for sportsmen addicted to buck-hunting to meet every season on the 29th of May, King Charles's Day, with oak

boughs in their hats, and to hunt young male deer, in order to enter the young hounds, and to stoop them to their right game, etc. This practice was termed "blooding the hounds," and the venison of the young deer killed was very highly esteemed.

THE ROLLING PASSION.—Rolling in foaming billows the devoted barque gallantly stemmed the briny wave. All that was left of six hundred; the wandering Jew "cheek by jowl" with the mariner brave. "I had a piece of pork," quoth Jack, "but, alas! for dainty dishes. It slipped o'erboard and tacked leeward to stuff the jelly fishes. We've got no rum; what's to be done? Look here, you greasy sinner, we'll cast the lot who's to be shot to give t'other a dinner." "Forbid it, Heaven," the Hebrew cried. "In thee Istiek no knife, no fork. Even in the jaws of death I hold t'were sin to eat of Christian pork." More he fain would have said but a wave broke his ear and under. And thus the poor Jew, so terrified, fell, when Jack's voice smote his ear like thunder. "'Tis I who cry. Look here, old boy! there's a sail to be seen in the offin'. Cheer up, old mate, we're not too late, and you won't have a watery coffin—for it's a sail, a real white sail, so we'll stash our fancy dialogue." "A shale!" Ben Israel made reply, "and I hasn't a single catalogue!"

THE BORRIS HOAX.—On the 16th of January, 1749, there took place in London a hoax which was well impressed on the public mind. A person advertised that he would this evening at the Haymarket Theatre play on a common walking cane the music of every instrument now used to surprising perfection; that he would on the stage get into a tavern quart bottle without equivocation, and while there singing several songs, and suffer any spectator to handle the bottle; that if any spectator should come masked he would if requested tell who they were, and that in a private room off the stage he would produce the representation of any person dead, with which the person requesting it should converse some minutes, as if alive. The prices proposed for this show were—gallery, 2s.; pit, 3s.; boxes, 5s.; stage, 7s. 6d. At the proper time the house was crowded with curious people, many of them of the highest rank, including no less eminent a person than the Culloden Duke of Cumberland. They sat for a little while with tolerable patience, though uncheered by music, but by and bye, the performer not appearing, there were signs of irritation. In answer to a sounding of sticks and rattals a person belonging to the theatre came forward and explained that, on the event of a failure of performance, the money should be returned. A young fellow threw a lighted candle upon the stage, and a general charge upon that part of the house followed. The greater part of the audience made their way out of the theatre, some losing a cloak, others a hat, others a wig, others their swords. One party, however, stayed in the house in order to demolish the inside, when the mob, breaking in, tore up the benches, broke to pieces the scenes, pulled down the boxes, in short, dismantled the theatre entirely, carrying away the things just mentioned into the street, where they made a mighty bonfire, the curtain being hoisted in the middle by way of flag. The proprietor of the theatre afterwards stated that, in apprehension of failure, he had reserved all the money taken, in order to give it back, and he would have returned it to the audience if they had not wrecked the house. It therefore would appear that either money was not the object aimed at, or, if aimed at, was not attained by the conjurer. Most probably he only meant to try an experiment on the credulity of the public.

THE PRASANT COUNTESS.—Died January 18, 1797, Sarah, Countess of Exeter, the heroine of Tennyson's poem, "The Lord of Burleigh." The real details of the romantic story form a curious instance of aristocratic eccentricity. Mr. Henry Cecil, while his uncle held the family titles, married a lady from whom, after fifteen years of wedded life, he procured a divorce. Before that event, being burdened with heavy debts, he put on a disguise, and came to live as a poor and humble man at Bolas Common, near Hodnet, a village in Shropshire. He was known

to none; no one came to inquire after him; and having no ostensible means of living, there were many surmises as to who and what he was. In anticipation of the divorce, he paid addresses to a young lady of considerable attractions, named Taylor, who, however, being engaged, declined his hand. He lodged with a cottage labourer, named Hoggins, whose daughter, Sarah, a plain, but honest girl, next drew the attention of the noble refugee. He succeeded, notwithstanding the equivocal nature of his circumstances, in gaining her heart and hand. The probability is that the young noble was simply eccentric, or that a craving for sympathy in his solitary life had disposed him to take up with the first respectable woman who should come in his way. Under the name of Mr. John Jones, he purchased a piece of land near Hodnet and built a house upon it, in which he lived for some time with his peasant bride, who never knew who he really was. He disappeared for a short time occasionally, in order, as is supposed, to obtain supplies of money. The marriage took place on the 3rd of October, 1791, not long after the divorce with the first Mrs. Henry Cecil was accomplished. Two years after the marriage (December 27, 1793) Mr. Cecil succeeded to the peerage and estates through the death of his uncle, and it became necessary that he should quit his obscurity at Hodnet. Probably the removal of the pair to Burleigh House, near Stamford, was effected under the circumstances described by Tennyson. It is also true that the peasant countess did not prove quite equal to the part she had been drawn into. After having borne her husband three children (amongst whom was the peer who succeeded) she sickened and died, January 18, 1797. In a portrait of the noble pair by Lawrence, kept in Burleigh House, the lady appears possessed of an oval countenance, of considerable beauty, and is the reverse of a rustic in point of style. The earl was afterwards created a marquis, he married a third wife, the Dowager Duchess of Hamilton, and died in 1804.

AN OLD ENGLISH PARISH.—The parish or manor, in the period before us (1260-1400, Edward I. to Henry IV.) was divided into four portions: first, the lord held—together with his feudal rights over the whole, except the glebe of the parson or impropriator—a demesne which he cultivated by his bailiff; secondly, there were the small estates possessed by the freeholders who paid quit-rents; thirdly, there were the tenements and lands of villeins, bordarii, etc.; and, lastly, the waste or "common" over which all tenants had right of pasture and sometimes of turf. The estates of the "villeins" were frequently as extensive as those of the freeholders, and were always, as far as I have found, held at fixed and commutable services, the commutation being determinate but accepted only at the pleasure of the lord, who could exact the service if he preferred to do so, just as the tenant might, if he saw fit, proffer the service instead of the money payment. The buildings belonging to the lord consisted of a manor house and grange. The manor house contained at least three principal rooms—the hall, the dormitory, and the "solar" or parlour. The furniture of the manor house was scanty. Glass windows were rare, a table put on tressels, a few forms and stools, or a long bench stuffed with straw or wool, with one or two chairs, and a chest or two for linen, formed the hall furniture. A brass pot or two for boiling, and two or three brass dishes; a few wooden platters and trenchers, or more rarely of pewter; an iron or leather candlestick; a kitchen knife or two; a box or bowl for salt, and a brass ewer or basin, formed the movables of the ordinary house. The walls were garnished with matchlocks, scythes, reaping hooks, bucks, corn-measures, and empty sacks. The dormitory contained a rude bed, and but rarely sheets or blankets, for the gown of the day was generally the coverlet at night.—**THOROLD ROGERS, M.P.**

THE PEASANT'S HOME.—Speaking of the same period (Edward I. to Henry the Fourth) Mr. Rogers says: "His dwelling was built of the coarsest material, most frequently of wattles daubed with mud and clay—bricks never appear

to be used. We in this age cannot realise the privations of a mediæval winter, the joy of a mediæval spring and the glad thankfulness of an abundant harvest. The offering of a candle at the shrine of a saint was a rational tribute because it was a choice personal enjoyment. Few persons could then afford to break the Curfew. . . . Scurvy, in its most virulent forms, and leprosy, modified perhaps by the climate, were common disorders, for the people lived on salt meat half the year, and not only were they without potatoes but they do not appear to have had other roots which are now in common use; carrots and parsnips, onions and cabbage appear to have been the only esculent vegetables. Spices were quite out of reach, sugar a very costly luxury, bees very rare, cloth was coarse and dear, linen very costly—so much so that sheets were often the subjects of ostentatious doles, and at this time and centuries afterwards were devised by will.

OLD MERCHANTS AND FAIRS.—Till quite the end of the Papal rule in England, observes Mr. Rogers, the exports and imports were largely in the hands of foreigners, and during the fourteenth century the internal trade was also largely in their hands. The "foreign streets" at the great Fairs at Stourbridge, Winchester, "Bartholomew," York and other places were the most conspicuous parts of the display. . . . The Jew, expelled from England, had given place to the Lombard exchanger. The Venetian and Genoese merchant came with his precious stock of Eastern produce, his Italian silks and velvets, his store of delicate glass. The Flemish weaver was present with his linens of Liège and Ghent. The Gascon wine-grower was ready to trade in the produce of his vineyard. . . . The collection of the Customs was frequently entrusted to foreign merchants, either as an accountable trust or for a stipulated rent. These merchants were generally partners of some of those strong and numerous companies who had their chief houses in Italy, and had branches of their trade managed by one or more of their partners in London and other cities of Europe, whereby they got into their own hands nearly the whole of the trade between the Mediterranean coast and the countries in which they settled. These merchants were most serviceable to the kings in lending them money and negotiating exchanges and other kinds of business for them, and consequently enjoyed a good deal of their favour. They were also generally agents of the Pope and received the money collected for him, which money they either remitted to him or lent out at interest on his account. . . . The German Hanseatic merchants were an important body in London in 1282, and they seem to have had charge of the city gate of Bishopsgate in London.—**Fortnightly Review.**

"GEORGE ELIOT (MRS. CROSS).—In a letter to the "Daily News" Mr. Owen, of Burton-on-Trent, mentions some particulars about "Adam Bede"—the principal characters were not creations. That they were living men and women, though disguised and somewhat transposed, is shown by a tablet in the Wesleyan chapel at Wirksworth bearing the following inscription: "Erected by numerous friends to the memory of Elizabeth Evans, known to the world as 'Dinah Bede,' who, during many years proclaimed alike in the open air, the sanctuary, and from house to house the love of Christ. She died November 9, 1849, aged 74. And of Samuel Evans, her husband, who was also a faithful local preacher in the Wesleyan Society. He finished his earthly course December 8, 1858, aged 81 years." In Coldwell Street, Wirksworth, it seems there lives a cousin of "George Eliot."

REMARKABLE DREAM.—A few nights ago (according to the "Echo" of January 10) the wife of a fishing-smack master of Brixham dreamed that her husband's boat was run into, and woke up screaming: "Richard, save my boy," one of her sons as well as her husband being on board. Early next morning her eldest son said that he heard his father come home in the night and go upstairs with his sea boots on. They told these dreams to their neighbours,

who ridiculed their fears, but intelligence has now arrived that on the very night of the dreams the vessel was run down by an American steamer and the crew of six persons drowned. Several instances will be found in Dr. F. G. Lee's book mentioned a week or two ago in these columns—in particular a dream concerning Mr. Smith of the Museum and the German savant Dr. Delitzsch.

SOME FREQUENT ECCLESIASTICAL TERMS.—The **VIGIL** or eve of a Feast is the day before it occurs. But if the feast should fall upon a Monday, the vigil of it is Saturday. The **OCTAVE** of each feast is always the eighth day after it occurs; for example, the Feast of St. Hilary is the thirteenth of February, hence the octave of St. Hilary is the 20th of that month. "In the Octave" means within the eight days following any particular feast.

"WE THREE!"—Shakespeare has, in "Twelfth Night":—"How now, my hearts? Did you never see the picture of we three?" Our ancestors had some good practical jokes that never tired by repetition, and this was one of them. The picture of "We Three" was a picture or sign of Two Fools, upon which was an inscription, **WE BE THREE**, so that the unlucky fellow who was tempted to read it supplied "argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever."

HOBBY HORSES.—The hobby horses which people ride in the present day are generally very quiet animals, which give little offence to public opinion. But the hobby horse to which Shakespeare alludes, in "Hamlet" and elsewhere, was an animal considered by the Puritans so dangerous that they exerted all their power to banish him from the May Games. The people, however, clung to him with wonderful pertinacity; and it is most probably for this reason that, when an individual cherishes a small piece of folly which he is unwilling to give up, it is called his hobby horse. The hobby horse was turned out of the May Games with Friar Tuck and Maid Marian, as savouring somewhat of Popery. This horse required a person of considerable skill to manage him, although his body was only of wicker work, and his head and neck of pasteboard. Strutt, in his "Queen-hoo Hall," has given at length the gambols of the hobby horse and the dragon and Friar Tuck.

LORD ERSKINE'S GHOST STORY.—It is well known that Lord Erskine had experienced what he considered as a ghostly visitation. The circumstances, as related by himself, will be found in Lady Morgan's Book of the Boudoir. "When I was a very young man, I had been for some time absent from Scotland. On the morning of my arrival in Edinburgh, as I was descending the steps of a close, or coming out from a book-seller's shop, I met our old family butler. He looked greatly changed, pale, wan, and shadowy as a ghost. 'Eh! old boy,' I said, 'what brings you here?' He replied, 'To meet your honour, and to solicit your interference with my lord, to recover a sum due to me which the steward at the last settlement day did not pay.' Struck by his looks and manner, I bade him follow me to the booksellers, into whose shop I stepped back; but when I turned to speak to him he had vanished. I remembered that his wife carried on some little trade in the Old Town. I remembered even the house and flat she occupied, which I had often visited in my boyhood. Having made it out, I found the old woman in widow's mourning. Her husband had been dead for some months, and had told her on his death bed that my father's steward had wronged him of some money, but that when Master Tom returned he would see her righted. This I promised to do, and shortly after I fulfilled my promise. The impression was indelible." Lord Erskine, son of the Scottish Earl of Buchan, was born in 1750, and entered the navy as midshipman at the age of fourteen. At eighteen he transferred his services to the army, and at twenty-seven settled in the study of the law, the profession in which he acquired such eminence. He became Lord Chancellor in the Whig Ministry. He died in 1823. A full and most interesting account of him will be found in Lord Campbell's "Lives of the Chancellors."



[UNHAPPY LOVERS.]

AN OLD MAN'S DARLING.

An apartment in a noble mansion, filled with the evidences of wealth, and of the most perfect taste. Sunny windows draped in frosted lace and shimmering silk; soft, mossy carpets, whose depth would deaden the heaviest footfall; niches where marble gleamed and canvas glowed. A profusion of flowers filled the many vases, but they were fading and wilted, and their petals were strewn over the floor. Soft, luxurious couches wooed one to their warm embrace, though littered with wraps that the negligent servant had evidently not removed.

This was the casket; where was the gem? Oh! there she stood in all her beauty, gazing moodily out into the street; beautiful as a dream, fairer than any pictured face that smiled upon her from the walls; yet, now, though surrounded by wealth, endowed with beauty, she felt, this glorious May morning, that no beggar by the wayside was more to be pitied than she.

A few short weeks ago, and Norma Hamilton was as aimlessly happy as any pretty moth that floats and flutters and smiles about the candle of society. She was the accomplished daughter of a wealthy broker, a beauty and a belle; what more could exacting feminine nature ask for? The remorseless wheel of fortune, that grinds tirelessly year in and year out, showering all the good things of this life into a few laps, into others the rags and tatters, had lavished bene-

fits into her hands until they could hold no more; another turn, and, lo! where before she had desired acceptance as a favour, now she turned a scornful lip and said:

"You have thanklessly received and enjoyed my gifts, now know their worth by the want of them!"

It was the same old story told so often as to have become monotonous. A financial crash burying amid its ruins the life and wealth of the most indulgent of parents and husbands. A delicate lady-mother and two daughters thrown helpless upon the world, with nothing to hope for from the hard-hearted creditors who, even now, were clamouring for the roof that covered their heads for a few weeks.

The door opened and Mrs. Hamilton entered, followed by her younger daughter. She sank into a blue velvet arm-chair, and brought into view her laced cambric handkerchief, that it may be ready in case of emergency.

"Norma, my child," she plaintively said, clasping her hands loosely in her lap, and glancing at her helplessly, "I do not wish to influence you in this matter, but I do not know what there is left for us to do if you do not accept Gerald Hunton. Although he is much older than you, yet that, I think, ought not to be an objection. He is very wealthy—is of one of the best families, and is a gentleman by birth and education. He was your poor father's friend, and one whom we have known and respected all our lives. What more can you desire?"

Norma remained speechless, her face still turned toward the window; but her clasped hands were held tighter together, and her perfect lips were compressed. The low, plaintive voice went on.

"He is generosity itself. That he worships you there can be no doubt. How magnanimous of him to come forward at this juncture and offer everything for your acceptance! I surmise it is his influence in our behalf that permits us to remain here in our dear old home."

And now the handkerchief was brought into use.

Wiping daintily her mild blue eyes and white lids, she continued:

"I believe you do not know, Norma, that he is your father's heaviest creditor. I am sure there is barely enough to satisfy the others."

Would the soft, low voice never cease? Norma turned toward her mother, suddenly, impetuously, and said:

"Pardon me, mamma, but you said you did not wish to influence me. This is all quite unnecessary, for I have decided to accept him. When he calls will you receive him and tell him of my decision? Make any excuse you please, I cannot see him."

And she hurried from the room.

She reached her own apartment, and, locking the door, sank into a chair, and looked the matter squarely in the face. Had she done right? She asked herself the question over and over again. The only answer was: "What is there beside for me to do? Nothing!"

She could not learn, at this late day, to work as other women do. Even if she could, her efforts would scarcely provide for her own needs, letting alone her mother, who had never known the want of luxuries; and her sister's education must be out short.

"How much better am I than other women?" she asked, fiercely. "There's many a woman good and true who would stop at no sacrifice for those she loves."

This could hardly be called a sacrifice. A noble, generous man would smooth all the rough places over which her feet might tread. He asked no drudgery, no humiliating servitude, such as she imagined she would have to know as a labourer in the ranks; nothing but the gift of herself.

"How small a return!" she said, with curling lips.

Ought he not to be treated with the most sincere respect? She doubted not that many among their former acquaintances were almost as strangers now, so great an influence has the loss of wealth upon the average fashionable mind. She had seen enough of the world, in her twenty-two years, to know that her social status would be very materially altered now, unless—And she was heart-free, she assured herself, crowding back a vision of dark eyes and a tender hand-clasp amid the almost tropical luxuriance of a dimly-lighted conservatory. No, she surely loved no one outside of her own family.

"I might have learned to love him, but that is all over now!"

She heard the street door open and shut, and felt an impulse of something akin to pity for the man who, as her husband, would know what it was to wed a loveless bride. She started to her feet and hastily smoothed her roughened hair and bathed her face. As she passed down the hall she encountered her mother.

"I have changed my mind, mamma," she said. "I will see him."

And she went forward to meet her fate.

Gerald Hunton started to meet her as she appeared. What a handsome man he was in spite of his fifty years! To be sure his hair and his heavy moustache were streaked with gray; but his form was as straight and elastic, and his fine grey eyes as handsome, while wrinkles were almost as much strangers to his brow as to young men of half his years.

"I hardly expected this honour," he said, courteously, as he took her hand and led her to a seat. "I sincerely hope you did not incon-

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venience yourself to receive me. I thought after I left here last evening that perhaps I ought to have given you more time. If you wish it, Nor—Miss Hamilton—do not hesitate to say so."

"No, no!" she answered, hastily. "I do not. I do not want you to be deceived in this matter, sir. I have a sincere regard for you, and you always held my highest respect; but—but—sir, I do not love you as I know you deserve to be loved, and as a wife ought."

"But you will learn that. I may be conceited, Norma, but I will labour so to gain your affection that I am confident that it will be mine. Yes, I knew you did not love me; but that I will risk. For so happy will I make you, so care free shall your life be as my wife, that you will never regret it."

How mockingly the echoes of these words came back to him in the years that followed!

"Mr. Hunton," she said, a realising sense of his worth coming over her, "you do me the greatest honour. You know the state of our finances, and that only this lies between us and utter want. A life such as I have led is scarcely one to fit me for the labour that will be required to allow us to live. Can you, knowing this, that for a cowardly fear of poverty, a home for myself and the others, a shelter from the sneers of the world, I would be your wife, can you still desire it?"

"I can—I do."

"Then take me. It is a very one-sided agreement, sir. But I will try to do my duty, and, as far as possible, make you happy."

"My darling!" he murmured over her outstretched hand. He had too much good sense to indulge in sentimentalism which he knew to be out of place. "You shall indeed be an old man's darling." Then, after a pause, "It is scarcely fitting that while in mourning we should be entertaining thoughts of brides, but we can hardly dispense with a little business matter. You will not, of course, wish our marriage to take place until your mourning is over. Meanwhile, you will remain here and have your old servants back, or would you rather remove to some other place, where the associations are not so painful?"

She sees her position at a glance. Shall she accept his bounty while he is yet a lover? No.

"If you will not consider me indelicate, sir, I should prefer the wedding to come off quietly and at once. It will cause less comment than—the other alternative," half pleadingly.

"Very well. I thought of that myself, but did not like to suggest it. Please name a day."

"This day week."

How she surprised herself at her coolness and self-command! If it must be, the sooner the better.

How business-like the whole thing seemed to her as she gained her room upon his departure! In spite of the leaden weight at her heart she laughed aloud.

"I have so often imagined the heroics into which my future lord would fall when I named the day!" she thought, with a bitter smile. "I am glad he has the tact to see that that nonsense would only disgust me. Oh! no doubt but I shall be as nearly happy as half the women who marry for love, only to find that they have been egregiously fooled, and that the love is all on one side. I should infinitely prefer being the adored rather than the adorer in such a case; it certainly would be of more practical use."

How hard and cold she was growing! Well, perhaps it was better so.

"Here is a card, miss," said a servant, their only one now, poking her head into the door and tossing it upon a table near.

Norma's eyes flashed. She opened her lips to speak, but the girl had withdrawn her head and closed the door. Then she remembered, and, very meekly for the haughty Miss Hamilton, she arose and fetched the card herself to the window, for the bright promise of the morning had given place to a leaden sky and a chilly wind.

"CARY BOUTELLE," and underneath in pencil were these words: "I must see you for a few moments."

She had not thought to refuse. It was the last time, and no one could blame her for this. So, with a light in her eyes that had been wanting when she descended those stairs before, she went.

"My darling!" was the exclamation that met her, and two hands were extended to draw her close to him, while kisses were dropped upon her face.

She could no more resist him than the graceful willow can resist trembling in the soft, fragrant breaths of the south wind. For one blissful moment she lay in his arms; her arms about his neck, his lips pressed to hers. What mattered heaven and earth to them in that moment? Heaven was very near—ay, in each other's heart!

But not for long; gently she disengaged herself, the soft flush of burning kisses upon her cheeks and lips, and the happy light of a newborn love in the amber depths of her glorious eyes. She sank into a seat and buried her face in her hands. It was the first moment of weakness.

He knelt before her and held her to him firmly.

"Norma!" How the rich voice thrilled her! "My darling, my queen! You love me, sweet, as I love you. Look up and tell me so."

"I love you." The amber eyes looked into his brown ones, and the fair, golden head dropped upon his shoulder. "Oh, Cary, you must not—I must not—think of this! How wicked, how unwomanly I am."

He arose to his feet, and she sat up straight and erect in her chair.

"But you love me?"

"Yes, Heaven help me for the weakness in telling you so! And I am to be married this day week."

"What?"

"It is true."

"To marry whom, may I ask?"

She shivered at the clear, cold tones of his voice.

"Gerald Hunton."

"And you will do this thing; loving me with your whole soul, you will perjure yourself for that old man's wealth!" He ground an imprecation between his teeth. "If ever I despised myself, it is at this moment. But for my accursed indolence, I should have something to offer you. Is there no alternative? Think, for Heaven's sake, Norma! Is there no hope for us?"

"None!"

He caught her fiercely in his arms, and strained her to him until a cry of pain burst from her.

He kissed her lips, her eyes, her hair frantically. His face was white, and his eyes were black as night.

Norma shivered in affright.

"Oh, Cary, don't! You frighten me!"

"And you will sell yourself to that old man," seemed to be the burden of his lament. "For his gold you will go to his arms, and receive and return his caresses! Great Heaven! I cannot endure it!"

The handsome head was bowed on the folded arms that lay upon the table, while his strong frame trembled with the violence of his emotions.

"If I could, if the wealth that will be mine when it will be worthless were only at my disposal now, this should never be."

He looked up with bloodshot eyes.

"I thought you knew, understood that we were tacitly engaged. Of course I could not speak while you were the heiress of a rich man, and I was cowardly awaiting the ease of a dead man's shoes. Norma," he cried, in a sudden whirlwind of passion, and catching her hands again, "will you marry me? Marry me, and live in poverty? Can you? Do you love me enough for this? Can you face the world with me?"

For one brief moment she hesitated, as the blissfulness of being his wife came to her. Then

she remembered the others. Should she make their lives hideous? Would not the unaccustomed drudgery of a poor man, burdened with a family, soon change this passionate love to passionate hate for the cause of it?

Ah! she knew him better than he knew himself. She knew the life he had lived fitted him for usefulness as little as it had in her own case. It could not be, and this she told him in words as gentle yet as firm as possible.

"You are right," was all he said. He made an unsteady step toward the door. "Good-bye, Norma!" with his hand on the knob.

She flew to his side.

"Shall we part like this," she cried, "Cary?"

He turned and caught her again to his breast.

"You would tempt a man into Hades itself, I believe!" he said, hoarsely, and he pressed kiss after kiss upon her lips. "There!" And he pushed her roughly from him, and she was alone.

An hour passed and she still lay prone upon the floor. What mattered it whether she lived or died? The man she loved was infinitely beyond her reach. And if he were not? She doubted even then whether she dared trust herself with him. She knew his utter worthlessness, his shameful indolence and want of even the common virtue of independence. He was content to live upon the bounty of his stepfather, wasting his youth and golden opportunities in waiting for his wealth.

If he loved her as he ought, to be worthy the name of lover, he would consider no object insurmountable that stood between them. He would have carved a foothold for himself long ere this were he worthy of her love. And this she knew. How weak he was! how despicable! Yet her woman's heart went out to him then when she thought of the magnetism of his look, his touch, his voice, and she almost cursed the fate that kept her from him. Oh, mysteries of mysteries called woman's heart!

It was the quietest of quiet weddings, that in which Norma and her elderly lover took the principal parts. Her voice never faltered even when she promised to love, honour and obey the man by her side.

If a pair of dark eyes with curling lashes, and the rich, mellow tones of a musical voice came to her in that moment, they were quickly banished to the gloomy depths of her heart to be resurrected only in solitude.

A year passed, and they were all in Rome. Such a year Norma prayed never to know again.

Although her husband was all that could be desired by the most exacting wife, yet his every effort seemed to turn her heart further and further away from him.

She chided herself sharply for her feelings toward him, and she tried conscientiously to make herself believe that she did not harbour a loving thought of the sweet long ago; yet in her soul she knew that it lived bright and warm as a year ago.

She was unaccountably restless, and thinking to find contentment in occupation, began the study of vocal music, where she had left it years before.

That she had an exquisite voice none knew better than herself; so day after day she studied and practised upon her one gift. She had felt, in the days of her early youth, that were it required of her she could write her name high in the temple of fame.

But there had been no spur to her ambition, no necessity for the task. Thus for the want of an impetus her talent lay wrapped in a napkin until now, from very ennui, she began listlessly to wonder how it would seem to be a great singer, and from this she began to try.

Her husband was called home by the voice of his native country, a position in the cabinet was offered him in the newly formed ministry, and he accepted it. Norma pleaded her musical studies and gained his ready consent to remain.

Two years more passed and matters were the same as then.

One day the shock came. Cary Bontelle was married. She had known of his step-father's death and his will in his favour a year ago. Whenever she thought of him it was with the glow of passionate love for herself upon his face, his clasp upon her hands, and his kisses warm upon her lips. And he could marry another loving her!

She forgot her own story. "If he has married her he does not love her," she thought, triumphantly, and hugged to her heart this scrap of comfort.

There was a continual war going on within her. No one could reproach himself more than she did in those days. Battle after battle was fought and her worst self came off each time victorious. She even blamed her noble husband for her misery.

After awhile the constant warfare wore her nearly out, and she longed for home.

Then her husband's grave face was a continual reproach to her, and at length she felt that the life she was living was only a lie, and that she was heaping upon herself and him untold tortures. She grew almost mad at this time, and ever after stoutly affirmed that she did not know herself what she was doing.

Her sister Berenice had married in Italy a wealthy Englishman, and her mother was with her in her new home. On this side the water she felt alone.

She grew morose and even sullen. Day after day passed and her husband would seek her presence, only to be repulsed haughtily, insolently.

"I cannot live in this way—I will not!" she said.

And one day she left his house and went to a distant city.

"You need not seek me," she wrote in the little note which she left for him. "I will not live a lie longer. When I can love you as a wife ought I will return to you and not until then. I fear it will never be. And another thing I dread more than all, which may sound strange to you in the face of my conduct of late. Oh, Gerald, my husband! I fear you will learn (if you have not already) to hate me."

A queer idea indeed! Was the woman demented? Very like it, I admit.

Very quietly the injured husband searched for his wife. Months passed and still no trace of her. He grew disheartened, and, relinquishing all else, he spent his time in travel and eager search.

The opera house was crowded to its utmost capacity this bright February evening, and all were eager for a glimpse of the new prima donna, whose fame as a singer had preceded her advent here.

Our friend Gerald Hunton, knowing his wife's passion for music, haunted every place of that kind. As he sat in his box his glasses were directed first here and then there, to different parts of the house, but to meet with the usual disappointment.

At length he fell into a reverie, and did not raise his head even when a burst of applause greeted the songstress. What cared he for such as she? He had come hoping almost without hope that he should find his darling; but she was not here, and he arose to leave the house as the first silvery burst of melody floated out on the perfumed air. He turned and stood like a statue gazing on to the stage. This was what he saw:

A scene of ancient times, when gladiators were wont to fight within the arena. A duel had been fought, and one, a handsome youth, had fallen with his shield still on his arm, his sword in his stiffened hand. His comrades were gathered about him, dressed in the glittering costumes of the day.

A female figure knelt beside him, and gazing into his face, with clasped hands, she says her lament:

"Oh, Bertrand, my love, live for me!" It was wondrously well done. The drooping, grief-stricken figure, veiled in long masses of bronze hair, the pretty costume, the sweet, plain-

tive voice filled with grief and love and longing appealed to every heart. As the curtain dropped there was a momentary hush, then applause that shook the building. Gerald Hunton resumed his seat.

She made her appearance several times in character, and at the last in her own personality in full dress.

A train of blue velvet and white lace swept the stage; a low corsage showed the graceful contour of throat and arms, milky pearls gleam like moonbeams upon the white neck, the dainty arms, and amid the burnished waves of her gold brown hair.

In answer to an encore, she sang that old, yet ever beautiful song, "You'll Remember Me." How real sounded the deep sadness of the magnificent voice!

"There may, perhaps, in such a scene
Some recollection be
Of days that have as happy been,
And you'll remember me."

As the sweet notes floated away the audience arose as in a body, and storm after storm of delighted rapture followed her from the stage. This was her first appearance, and it was a most flattering success.

Gerald Hunton recognised his wife at the first moment he heard her voice. She had singled him out of the audience and that last song he knew was sung for him. Her white arms were outstretched to him, her sweet eyes looking straight at him, and her pleading voice was for his ear alone.

Long after her departure he sat there in a whirl of thought. He had never realised what he should do in case he found her.

His first care had been to find her, and now that that was accomplished what next should he do? As he arose to leave the box when he found the building almost deserted, a little page spoke to him.

"Are you Mr. Gerald Hunton?"

"I am."

"Here is a note for you."

And he reached one out to him. He opened it and read:

"Love sends; will you come?"

"Lead the way," was his command, and after numberless turns and staircases they reached a door before which his guide stopped.

"This is Mademoiselle Andrea's private boudoir," he said and left.

Gerald Hunton tapped lightly on a panel, and he heard in answer a voice that thrilled him through say:

"Come in."

He opened the door and stood upon the threshold, gazing in astonishment at the picture before him. There she stood, still clad in her stage dress of velvet, lace and pearls, the chandelier above shedding soft light upon her, and in her arms, held out to him, was—could he believe his eyes? a fair-haired babe, looking at him with eyes like his own.

He closed the door behind him mechanically, and waited for her to speak. She smiled on his bewilderment, and kissing the flower-like face in her arms, she held it out to him again.

"Your boy asks forgiveness for his mother."

"My boy?" He held out his arms and clasped mother and child close within them.

"Norma, darling, what does this mean?"

"It means that the love which should have been yours four years ago is yours at last. Our boy taught his mother that sweet lesson."

How the splendid eyes filled with tears as she looked into his own.

"And, Gerald, you have not learned to hate me?"

"Hate you! Oh, my darling, my precious wife, God knows I love you only too well! Now tell me what is the meaning of all this, and why did you not come back to me?"

She began at the beginning and told the whole. Her inexplicable infatuation for Cary Bontelle was not omitted.

"I believe his very impetuosity, his hot passion and words, in contrast to your quietness, was what I admired the most. I knew he was unprincipled, that he was not a man whom I

could respect; yet he held a fascination for me as strong as it was strange. It was the love that I loved, more than the lover; and when I met him and his wife, and saw the man as others saw him, badgered by that ugly, bold-faced woman whom he had married for money, because he had spent his own in debauchery and wickedness, every particle of love I ever felt for him was turned to loathing and disgust. I wondered at myself and my infatuation more than another could. And then that strange spell came over me and I believed I was for a time melancholy mad. I hated you, I hated myself and all the world. In a fit of desperation I left home. I went away into the country and sought shelter at the home of a distant relative of my father's. Thanks to your unbounded generosity, I had money enough to provide for my few wants until baby was born. Then I came to myself, and I longed so much to see you, Gerald, and to ask your pardon for the great wrong I had done you. I sent letters and telegrams to you till I concluded that either you were dead, abroad, or that which I had feared, and I knew I so richly deserved, your hate, had at last, through more than earthly patience, come to you.

"I waited heart-sick for a word from you, as a condemned man for pardon; but it never came, and at length, though, as I constantly read your name in the newspapers and consequently knew you were alive, hope died. I began to see my position and to know that unless I was willing to undergo the humiliation of asking aid from my sister I must starve or work. The latter I at once decided to do. I gained a position as organist in a church, until I was induced by the repeated request of Mr. G., our manager here, to go on the stage. To-night I made my debut. I recognised you at once and sang, Gerald, for your ear alone. I forgot all else; I was pleading for pardon. Between the scenes I sent for baby, determined to risk all to him. You came, and, Gerald, can you forgive me for our child's sake?"

Tears were in both their eyes, as he drew her closer into his arms.

"My precious wife," he said, with infinite tenderness, smoothing her hair and kissing her sweet face, "not for his sake, but for your own, all is forgotten and forgiven. And now, dear, we will begin where we should have begun four years ago, with perfect love and trust in each other. Shall it be so?"

"Yes, yes!" she sobbed, hiding her face on his shoulder. "And I will be in truth as far as I can be, considering my terrible faults, an old man's darling."

FACETIÆ.

SO AP-Pears.

THEY were staring at the well-known red block with "Pears" on it. "What happens if I stare long enough?" asked one. "Oh," was the reply, "it 'pears blue." Funny Folks.

PIT-TABLE ATTEMPT.

WHAT sort of pit is it that one has to ascend, not go down into?—A pul-pit. Funny Folks.

NEW WORK.

"WATER," in current num-b-ers; also in (n)ice-bound volumes. Funny Folks.

MENTAL FOOD FOR THE SEASON.—The feast of freezin' and the floe of soul. Funny Folks.

AWFULLY HIGH.

OF course "The Cup" is naturally a very high-class drama. Is it not written for the Upper Ten-neysonians? Funny Folks.

SUGGESTION TO THE EXCHEQUER.—A "poll" tax on parrots. Funny Folks.

OVER-WORK.—Scientific ballooning.

Moonshine.

A BOB TALE.—A shilling novel.

Moonshine.

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UNKIND.

FRANK: "Won't you dance, Bell?"
 BELL: "No. 'Tis a waltz."
 FRANK: "I thought you liked a good waltz."
 BELL: "Yes; a good waltz. That's why I won't dance." Moonshine.

GRATITUDE.

FRIENDLY VENDOR: "They are good cigars; they only want keeping a bit."
 DICK: "Then, upon my word, you'd better keep 'em." Moonshine.

TIME SERVERS.—The "seconds" in a duel. Moonshine.

UNCONSTITUTIONAL WRITES.—Threatening letters. Moonshine.

PERFECTION.

GRISelda is a pattern maid,
 Whom nothing can excite,
 By all her slightest word's obeyed—
 She's always in the right.

Her prompt decision is superb,
 She knows no wicked spite;
 Her calmness naught can e'er disturb—
 She's always in the right.

No breeze that blows can rough her hair
 To rude unseemly plight,
 No mud to soil her dress would dare—
 She's always in the right.

Her steps she bends where she should go,
 She scorns the world's delight;
 She answers "Yes," she answers "No,"—
 She's always in the right.

Her figure's tall, her eyes are pale,
 Her form is spare and slight;
 Her thin, red lips no faults bewail—
 She's always in the right.

She always does the thing she should,
 Her sayings sages cite,
 Because, you see, 'tis understood
 She's always in the right.

Should I wed her, they say, my life
 Would be serene and bright;
 But, oh, I do not want a wife
 Who's always in the right.

No, no! My bride must have a fault,
 Or we'll ne'er jog along;
 That woman isn't worth her salt
 Who's never in the wrong! Fun.

An Irish landlord is stated to have hit upon a clever device for collecting his rents. He informed the priest that in the event of their being paid he should receive a commission, and the result was they were paid immediately. This is a very literal interpretation of priestcraft. Fun.

PEERS AND COMMONERS.

BLOGGS: "If this answer of yours is final, Lady Gertrude, I leave you, and shall doubtless soon hear of your marrying some common fellow."

LADY G.: "But were I to entertain your proposal it appears to me I should be accepting a commoner."

[Bloggs, though very rich, has not yet been recommended for a peerage.] Fun.

THE BIRTHPLACE.

SCHOOL BOARD INSPECTOR: "Where was Cardinal Wolsey born?"

LITTLE BOY: "Please, sir, in the cradle." Fun.

VAIN HOPE.

As the Government have determined on abolishing the use of the cat in the navy, we sincerely trust that all the mice will betake themselves to a seafaring life again. Fun.

On the first night of the new session all interest was naturally centred on the Irish question, and when, at a late hour, Alderman Fowler and Mr. Labouchere attempted to discuss the

affairs at the Cape, honourable members regarded their remarks in the light of the "rising of the bores." Fun.

A BRUTE.

SMITH: "Well, good ni', Brown; 'mazin' jolly evening. Bu' lookcher, what's going to shay to Mrs. B.?"

BROWN: "That's all ri'. All I got to shaysh, 'Well, my dear!' she'll say all the rest." Judy.

"GOT 'EM ON."

FACETIOUS GENTLEMAN: "Hallo, my braw callant, where did you get the breeks?"

BOY (indignant): "Heeh! I just got them where they grewed."

F. G.: "Then, my man, I think you've pu'd them ower soon." Judy.

KATIE'S ANSWER.

Och, Katie's a rogue, it is thrue,
 But her eyes, like the sky, are so blue,
 An' her dimples so swate,
 An' her ankles so nate,
 She dazed, an' she bothered me, too—

Till one mornin' we wint for a ride,
 Whin, demure as a bride, by my side,
 The darlint, she sat,
 Wid the wickedest hat
 'Neath purty girl's chin iver tied.

An' my heart, arrah, thin how it bate!
 For my Kate looked so temptin' an' swate,
 Wid cheeks like the roses
 An' all the red posies
 That grow in her garden so nate.

But I sat just as mute as the dead,
 Till she said, wid a toss of her head,
 "If I'd known that to-day
 Ye'd have nothin' to say,
 I'd have gone wid my cousin instead."

Thin I felt myself grow very bowld;
 For I knew she'd not scold if I towld
 Uv the love in my heart,
 That would never depart,
 Though I lived to be wrinkled and ould.

An' I said: "If I dared to do so,
 I'd lit go uv the baste, an' I'd throw
 Both arms round her waist,
 An' be stalin' a taste
 Uv them lips that are coaxin' me so."

Thin she blushed a more illegant red,
 As she said, widout raisin' her head,
 An' her eyes lookin' down,
 'Neath her lashes so brown,
 "Would you like me to drive, Misther Ted?"

STATISTICS.

THE POPULATION OF ENGLAND.—The Registrar-General estimates that the population of London will be found to have increased from 3,254,260 in 1871 to 3,707,130 in the middle of 1881. Brighton is estimated to have increased from 90,011 to 109,062; Portsmouth, from 113,569 to 136,671; Norwich, from 80,386 to 86,437; Bristol, from 182,552 to 217,185; Plymouth, from 68,753 to 75,700; Wolverhampton, from 68,201 to 76,850; Birmingham, from 343,787 to 400,680; Leicester, from 95,220 to 135,350; Nottingham, from 86,621 to 177,964; Liverpool, from 493,405 to 549,834; Manchester, from 351,189 to 364,446; Salford, from 124,801 to 194,077; Oldham, from 82,629 to 119,658; Bradford, from 145,830 to 203,544; Leeds, from 259,212 to 326,158; Sheffield, from 239,946 to 312,943; Hull, from 121,892 to 152,980; Sunderland, from 98,242 to 118,927; and Newcastle, from 128,443 to 151,822, taking the municipal boundaries in all cases except London. The

density of population of the large towns varies very greatly, namely, from 12 persons per acre in Norwich to as many as 106 in Liverpool, thus: Norwich, 12; Leeds, 15; Sheffield, 16; Nottingham, 18; Wolverhampton, 23; Oldham, 26; Bradford, 28; Newcastle, 28; Portsmouth, 31; Salford, 38; Leicester, 41; Hull, 42; Sunderland, 43; Brighton, 46; Birmingham, 48; Bristol, 49; London, 49; Plymouth, 54; Manchester, 85; and Liverpool 106 persons to the statute acre.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BATTER PUDDING.—The way to ensure a batter pudding being light is not to put too much flour. Two eggs, two tablespoonfuls of flour, one of butter, and a breakfastcupful of milk. Beat the butter to cream, beat the eggs, add a little white sugar, and for a change the grated rind of a lemon; put in the flour and milk, and beat all together. Pour the mixture into a buttered shallow dish, and bake twenty minutes in a sharp oven. It may also be baked in common saucers instead of a dish, when the puddings should be doubled up when turned out, so as to form semi-circles on the dish, and sifted sugar strewn over them. It is not universally known that putting sugar with batter before baking or boiling makes it heavy. Snow is a good substitute for eggs; buttermilk, if moderately fresh, is preferable to new milk; and making thin batter and boiling it from seven to ten minutes in a saucepan (stirring it the whole time), for either boiled or baked batter, makes it light, and is an equivalent for half the quantity of eggs generally used, and may be substituted for eggs when they are scarce. In cool weather batter for pancakes is better mixed the day before.

BREAD-CRUMB PUDDING.—Make a quantity of bread-crumbs by rubbing the crumbs of a stale loaf through a wire sieve; put a pint of milk and one ounce fresh butter into a saucepan on the fire, with sugar to taste, and the thin rind of a lemon, cut, if possible, in one piece; when the milk boils strew bread-crumbs into it until a thick porridge is obtained; turn it out into a basin. When cold remove the lemon-rind, and stir in one by one the yolks of four eggs, mix well, then stir in the whites of two eggs, beaten up to a stiff froth, and a small quantity of candied citron-peel, cut very thin. Have a plain mould, buttered and bread-crumbed very carefully all over, pour the composition into it, and bake it about half-an-hour. Serve cold with fruit or wine sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is expected that the first electric railway in the world, between Berlin and Lichtenfeld, will be opened in a few weeks. It is being constructed at the cost of the inventor, Dr. Werner Siemens.

WHILE two children, a boy and a girl named Williamson, were playing on the ice on a tidal lock at Yell, in Shetland, the surface gave way, and both were drowned. The accident was unobserved by anyone but a dog which accompanied the children, and he carried off the boy's cap and ran with it to the parents' house, thus giving information of the accident. Both bodies were recovered.

THE year 1881 presents the same peculiarities as the year 1883; it is a year of nines. The first two figures added together make nine; the two last make also nine. The four figures added together make 18, which is twice nine. The two first figures together, 18, equal twice nine; the two last figures, 81, equal nine times nine; 18 added to 81 makes 99; 18 subtracted from 81 leaves 63, which equals seven times nine; 6 plus 3 equals nine. Read backwards or forwards, 1881 is always 1881.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS should in all cases furnish us with their names and addresses. Letters signed simply with initials or a nom de plume may not always receive immediate attention, as our space is limited. No charge is made under any circumstances for advertisements appearing on this page.

R. T. C.—To make a paste for chapped hands which by constant use will preserve them smooth: Mix quarter-pound unsalted hog's lard, which has been washed in common water, and then in rosewater, with the yolks of two new-laid eggs and a large spoonful of honey. Add as much fine oatmeal or almond paste as will work into a paste.

D. P.—To raise the pile of velvet when pressed down: Cover a hot smoothing-iron with a wet cloth, and hold the velvet firmly over it; the vapour arising will raise the pile of the velvet with the assistance of shaking it a little.

C. R.—A telegram passes over 13,665 miles of wire between Melbourne and London.

C. M.—A bar of iron, or a poker, laid over the fire concentrates the heat of the passing smoke, and creates a draught through the fire.

E. W.—The first piano is believed to have been made by an English monk, Father Wood, at Rome, in the year 1711. Others, however, claim for it a French and German origin.

A GREAT SUFFERER.—In such a case it would be advisable to consult a medical man. There is apparently an affection of the mucous membrane that might not yield to ordinary simple remedies.

J. H. B.—The amount of sleep required in each case would be much the same under similar conditions, such as degree of physical exhaustion, &c. It is possible that a man's recuperative power is greater than a woman's, and that less rather than more sleep would be necessary.

R. T.—The Institution you inquire about respecting investment is in our opinion a perfectly safe one.

E. M.—When potatoes are frozen the amount of sugar they contain is doubled, the starch undergoing a corresponding diminution, while part of the protein passes from the coagulable into the soluble form. During the process of rotting the potato loses half its nitrogenous constituents and the whole of the sugar.

E. R. S.—The rule is to give ch its hard sound, as in chorus, in all such names, so that Chebar is pronounced Ke-bar, and Chilibab, Kil-lab. The same rule applies to g; it must have its hard sound as in go. If you will call to mind the Scripture names in this class with which you are familiar, such as Gibeon, Gilead, Gilboa, and Gilead, you will see that the rule holds good, and that the g always has its hard sound. There are only two exceptions to the rule, and they are Genesis and Gentile, in which the g is sounded like j.

A. S.—The origin of skates and skating is lost in remote ages. The first skates were made of bone, fastened to the foot with cords. Bone skates have been discovered in Iceland, Sweden, Holland, and England, and there are accounts of their use in London in the time of Henry II. The Dutch are supposed to have introduced iron skates. It is believed that the best facilities for skating are afforded by the countries of Northwestern Europe, where the ice is solid for several months every year and is but little covered with snow. It is also supposed that the best skaters are to be found in those countries. It is said that the Frieslanders will skate for a long time at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, and for short distances this rate has been greatly exceeded, but no absolutely accurate information on the subject is accessible. It is said that our "champion" skater, "Fish" Smart, has been known to travel over a mile of ice in three minutes.

ALICE.—How the continent of America was peopled, before its discovery by Columbus, is still one of those great problems that have baffled human intellect for ages. The present impression is that originally all the land of the globe formed one vast continent, and that by some tremendous convulsion of nature it was broken into fragments, and afterwards separated by vast oceans. Geologists inform us that volcanic action was the agent that brought about this change.

NOTICE.

We desire to draw the special attention of our Readers and their Friends to a NEW SERIAL STORY, to be commenced next week, in No. 929, under the Title of

"AN INJURED WOMAN,"

by an Author of pre-eminent ability and popularity.

EVERYONE SHOULD READ IT.

LIZZIE and LUCY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Lizzie is eighteen, medium height, fair, light hair, fond of home and music. Lucy is seventeen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of home and music.

LOVE, LAURIE, CONNY, and LILLIAN, four friends, would like to correspond with four young men. Love is eighteen, Laurie nineteen, Conny seventeen, and Lillian nineteen.

HAUGHTY LILLIE, eighteen, dark hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-three.

ZENOBIA, twenty-four, tall, dark, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady.

CARLIE and YENIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Carlie is twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Venie is eighteen, tall, fair, fond of home and children.

THE SWEETEST DAY.

"All days are alike to me," she said,
As she leaned on her hand her old grey head,
And dropped her eyes to conceal a tear—
"All days are alike to me, my dear!"

"But, grandma," queried the saucy sprite,
"Who in asking questions took keen delight,
"Was there never a day that stood confessed
As sweeter and fairer than all the rest?"

"All days are alike, you say; but, no,
I'm confident, grandma, that's not so;
And I wish you'd paint me, in colours true,
The sweetest day that you ever knew."

On the aged cheek was a crimson glow,
Like a red rose blossoming under snow;
And she smiled that lingered a moment there
Made the face of grandma seem wondrous fair.

"Ah, yes," she said, "there was once a day
In the long-ago, and the far-away,
When such perfect bliss to my heart was given
That the ground I trod on seemed part of heaven."

"In the ring of memory I have set
That brilliant day, where it sparkles yet,
Despite the changes that time may bring,
And a tear dropped down on her wedding ring."

"All days are alike to me now, in truth;
But it was not so in my early youth;
And of all the days that have passed away
There were none so sweet as my wedding day."

BERTHA, medium height, good-looking, brown hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman Respondent must be between twenty-one and thirty.

LIZZIE and ROSE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Lizzie is seventeen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Rose is twenty-one, medium height, fair, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be between nineteen and twenty-one, tall, good-looking.

ROSE, LILY and DAISY, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men. Rose is nineteen, medium height, dark, brown eyes, fond of home and children. Lily is seventeen, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music and singing. Daisy is eighteen, short, fair, blue eyes.

OLD YEAR and NEW YEAR, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies.

CLEANING ROD and RIFLE STUD, two friends in the Royal Marines, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Cleaning Rod is twenty-two, tall, dark, of a loving disposition. Rifle Stud is twenty-three, medium height, fair, fond of music and dancing.

JOHN GIG, JOHN DINGY and WILLIAM WHALER, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies. John Gig has light hair, blue eyes. John Dingy is twenty-three, light hair, blue eyes. William Whaler is twenty-one.

SKYRAIL JACK, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age. He is twenty-two, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

A. M., a signalman in the Royal Navy, nineteen, dark, brown hair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady.

BUNNIE TOOPER JACK, a signalman in the Royal Navy, twenty-two, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady.

C. C. S., thirty-two, medium height, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

SPILLING LINK, SLAB REEF and REEF BECKET, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Spilling Link is twenty, dark, of a loving disposition. Slab Reef is twenty-eight, tall, fair, fond of home and children. Reef Becket is twenty-two, medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing.

C. S. and J. R., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen in the Merchant Service. C. S. is seventeen, medium height, brown hair and eyes. J. R. is seventeen, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and dancing. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty.

OFF GROMMET and DOWN LOWER LIFT, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Off Grommet is nineteen, tall, fair, hazel eyes, good-looking. Down Lower Lift is nineteen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

GLOVE is responded to by—Isabelle, tall, fair, good-looking.

LAUREL by—May, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

BUGLE by—Jeanne, medium height, dark, fond of home and music.

LAMPLIGHTER by—Cissy, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

B. J. by—Gerty.

ZULU WARRIOR by—Clara, twenty, medium height, fond of music.

BULGARIA CHIEF by—Ada, twenty, tall, dark, fond of music.

CAPTAIN OF THE HEAD by—Sarah.

FAIR NELLIE by—Union Jack.

LIVELY FANNIE by—Willie.

RUBY by—All.

EMILIE by—Tom, thirty, tall, fair, fond of home and music.

PEARL by—Phil, thirty, tall, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of dancing.

NELLY by—George, twenty-eight, tall, fair, fond of music.

ROGER by—Alice, twenty-one, medium height, brown hair and eyes.

TIDGER by—Mollie, twenty, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and music.

JOE by—Nellie, eighteen, tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home and music.

J. A. C. by—Leo, twenty-five, tall, auburn hair.

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